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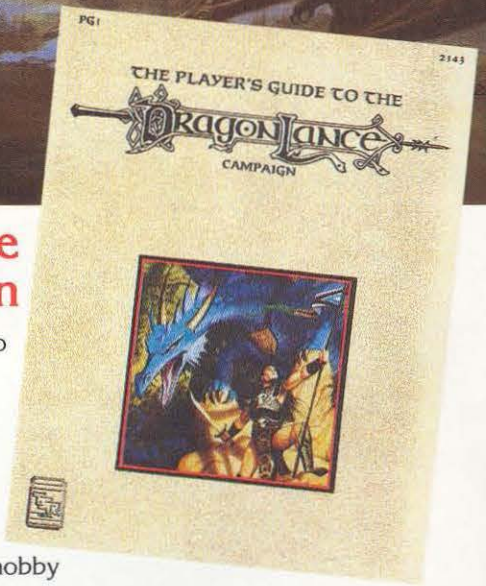

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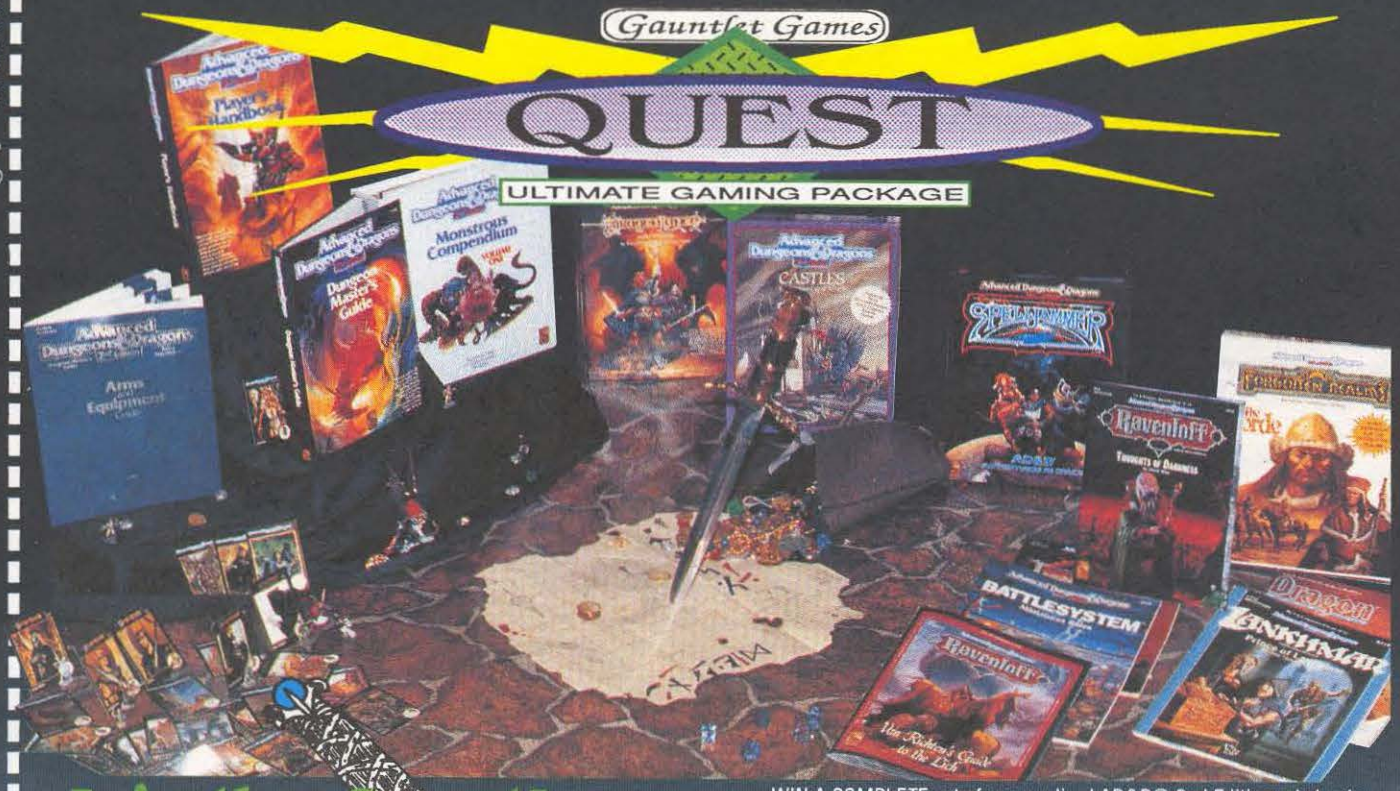

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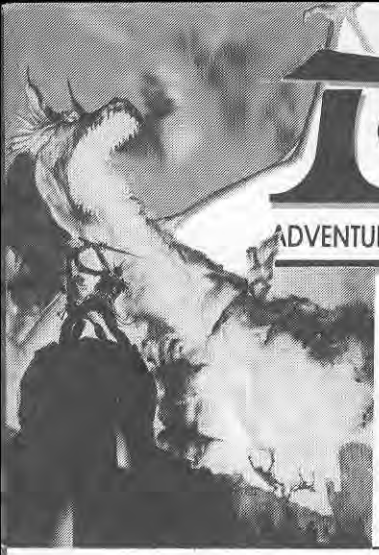
Dungeon®

ADVENTURES FOR TSR ROLE-PLAYING GAMES

SEPTEMBER/OCTOBER 1993 ISSUE #43



COVER: Artist Peter Clark paints an image of fiery destruction where brave adventurers are drawn "Into the Silver Realm."

Let's Do the Time Warp, Again

You probably know that magazines like this one work on a strange time schedule that doesn't bear much resemblance to what's going on in the real world. If I say, "Yesterday, we celebrated Roger Moore's 10th anniversary at TSR," you'll read my words in August when the event actually happened three months earlier. This is the September/October issue, and I'd really like to tell you how much I enjoyed the GEN CON® game fair, but you'll probably see these words before the convention occurs, and I'm actually writing them in June.

The adventures that you see in this issue were accepted one to two years ago and written quite a bit before that. We try to publish modules as quickly as possible, but merely filling an issue in the order the adventures arrive wouldn't give you a good mix of levels and settings. This is why the changes our readers request often come more slowly than we'd like.

Two items you consistently requested in our recent survey were more player handouts and more *Monstrous Compendium* pages. We're happy to oblige by including more of these whenever possible. See pages 31, 51, and 53 for some of this issue's goodies. We've also experimented with a new adventure format in this issue. Please tell us what you think about the layout of "Jacob's Well." We knew you'd have to do a lot of page flipping no matter how we set up the text, so we thought we'd have some fun with it.

So please don't feel that your comments and suggestions go unheeded because they aren't instantly implemented. We editor-types live four months ahead of normal people. Now if only I could use this time warp to give you winning numbers in the lottery!

This issue's quote was sent in by Stephen J. Smith.

Barbara G. Young

The Readers — **LETTERS** *6*

Randy Maxwell — **JACOB'S WELL**
(AD&D® adventure for a DM and one player, level 2-4) It's alive, it's hungry, it's growing. And you're on its menu. *8*

Roger Baker — **MOVING DAY**
(AD&D adventure, levels 3-5) Moving to a new place is always a chore. Now it's deadly. *24*

Trae Stratton — **MAYHEM AT MIDNIGHT**
(AD&D game DRAGONLANCE® adventure, levels 4-7) Get ready for a dazzling finale—yours. *40*

Lee Sheppard — **KING OLEG'S DILEMMA**
(AD&D game adventure, levels 1-4) Could your mission be a snow job? *44*

Steve Kurtz — **INTO THE SILVER REALM**
(AD&D game adventure, levels 8-12) Never, ever steal a silver sword. . *52*

Vol. VIII, No. 1

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"I kill where I wish and none dare resist. I laid low the warriors of old and their like is not in the world today. Then I was but young and tender. Now I am old and strong, strong, strong. . . ."

Smaug the Dragon
The Hobbit, J. R. R. Tolkien

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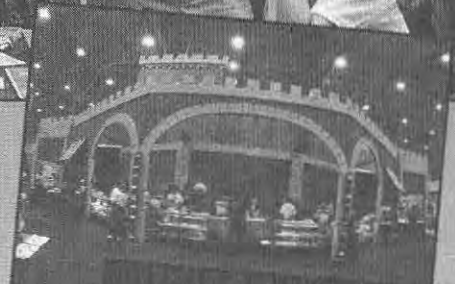

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LETTERS

Please let us know what you think about this issue of DUNGEON® Adventures. Although we can't print every letter we receive, we read them all and seriously consider your comments and suggestions. Write to: Letters, DUNGEON Adventures, P.O. Box 111, Lake Geneva WI 53147 USA.

Rose in Space

I have a question about "The Lady Rose" (issue #34). A group of my PCs managed to capture the *Dama Rosa* and plan to use it as a spelljamming craft. What is the *Dama Rosa*'s spatial tonnage? I need to know if the PCs can create a helm powerful enough to move it, and how many sailors they will need to hire.

I would really like to correspond with some fellow gamers; there are so few of us here in North Muskegon. Gamers of all ages, please write to me.

David R. Cleveland
2106 Moulton Ave.
North Muskegon, Michigan 49445

To become a spelljamming craft, the Dama Rosa *will require a major helm. Such helms cannot be made by the player characters. They must be purchased from the Arcane.*

Addressing Module Style

I'm writing this letter concerning two things. First, it is not at all obvious to a reader of this magazine where to send letters or requests for writer's guidelines. Admittedly, I have only been buying DUNGEON Magazine for about a year, but I looked through every one I own for helpful instructions as in the paragraph at the beginning of DRAGON® Magazine's letters page, and I didn't find a single suggestion.

Second, with one or two notable exceptions, the submissions for DUNGEON Magazine follow a linear style of play where events are planned to occur in a predetermined sequence. This method reduces player autonomy, giving them the feeling that they are not the masters of their own destiny. If the DM is going to bend, stretch, or break the scenario in order to make the PCs go where *he* wants, there seems little point in role playing at all. The DM may as well provide the players with a string of combat situations and puzzles, and have them roll dice to decide the outcome, heaping experience points and treasure on them when they succeed. Not only does this style take away from the scope for role playing, it also reduces the impact of the often intricate plots in some of the excellent adventures published. I would like to hear other readers' views on this. Please print my full address.

Chris Roberts
5 Victoria Road, Cirencester
Gloucestershire GL7 1EN
Great Britain

You'll notice that this page now opens with a short paragraph inviting readers to write to us, and telling them where to address their letters. I don't know why we didn't do this sooner. Thanks, Chris, for waking us up.

You can request writer's guidelines from the same address, but please write "DUNGEON Adventures Guidelines" on the outside envelope. Instructions for how to communicate with other departments (advertising, subscriptions, etc.) are found at the bottom of this page in the teeny, tiny type.

Solo Battles

I like your publication very much. However, there are some things I wish you could add. I like BATTLESYSTEM™ and *BATTLESYSTEM Skirmishes*, but I have only a limited number of scenarios to play with and my brain is running dry. Could you try to find space for a scenario or two in upcoming issues?

Second, my odd work shift makes it hard to get into a gaming group. I understand there are such things as solo games that one can play by oneself. I have yet to see one, but I've seen a reference to one in an index you printed many issues back. Could you either reprint it or find some new ones?

Peter Holland
San Antonio, Texas

We receive perhaps one idea a year each for a BATTLESYSTEM scenario and a solo adventure. This doesn't give us enough material so that we can chose the best to be published in DUNGEON Adventures. BATTLESYSTEM scenarios must be part of a completely plotted adventure (not just a collection of army rosters). Solo adventures can be done in a variety of formats, but the numbered-paragraph variety must be accompanied by a flowchart.

Folly's Folly

I have been a player and Dungeon Master for the D&D® game since 1979 and have been a subscriber to DUNGEON Magazine since issue #1. I would like to congratulate you on your continuance of an exciting and useful magazine. I really enjoyed Mark Bicking's "Khamsa's Folly," because it was easily adaptable to the DARK SUN®

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world. There are a few problems, however, with this adventure.

First, how is Paphoset able to send dreams across great distances to the adventuring party? Is it a spell or a magic item? Second, how is it that an eleventh-level priest is able to cast the ninth-level wizard spell *call* multiple times? Lastly, the description of the *call* spell states that the creature summoned will appear within 200′ of the caster. This leaves a very good chance that Paphoset will be discovered, especially if he has to spend five or six days teleporting the entire party to one location (I doubt that he can cast six ninth-level spells in one day).

David A. Dwyer
State College, Pennsylvania

Paphoset's call *is a device to get the story rolling. As the adventure states, the dreams are "hurled across the vastness of the Realms by strange and powerful magical items and spells." We assumed these items were strange enough and powerful enough to accomplish Paphoset's purpose.*

I don't think the author intended for each PC to be brought to Khamsa's tomb by an individual call. *"The DM should ensure that the PCs are together when the dreams and visions are received, so that the PC accepting the summons and entering the* gate *can be joined by his companions."*

Plotting and Scheming

In issue #41, I read with some distress a long complaint about how the adventures published in DUNGEON Magazine are too long on plot and too short on action. The writer also wanted more good ol' dungeon crawls, which would give him the opportunity to create his own plots.

I advocate the opposite view: I *like* the plots! Keep them! If a reader wants to create his own plots and just wants the "props" to inspire him, fine. All he has to do is mentally wipe out the author's plot and just use the scenery. For those of us DMs who have players who enjoy figuring out the mysteries of why these tall stones are turning into monsters, and why the mushrooms sing when the swamp hermit lights up his cigar, DUNGEON Magazine is ideal because it reduces the preparation time required to set up for a good session. It also satisfies the needs of those players who hunger for the story line. My players and I frankly dislike "no reason except it's there" or "kill and loot" dungeon crawls.

Very few of us have the luxury of time to set up a good, thinking plot. The demands of work, family, Chemistry 202, church, dental appointments, or whatever just don't allow the time to sit down and think through a great fantasy plot as often as we would like. Hence, I appreciate the work of those who have come up with a great plot, worthy enough to be published, which makes great reading for the DM and great playing for everyone.

In summary, keep the plots coming. Those of you who don't like the plots, just ignore them and use the maps and a random encounter table, or make up your own plot to suit your campaign. But don't penalize those of us who enjoy the creativity of great writers like Willie Walsh, Ted James Thomas Zuvich, and Steve Kurtz (just to name a few).

Paul F. Culotta
Fairfax, Virginia

Not As Wet As We Thought!

I am writing in response to Coby Hedberg's module, "Deadly Treasure," in issue #41. I found his use of magic incorporated into traps most creative and inventive. However, I did discover one oversight in his adventure.

In area 6, the imp Rat-Stabber may trap the PCs in a *forcecube* with a *decanter of endless water.* As deadly as this sounds, I think Mr. Hedberg underestimated the volume of the cube that is supposed to fill with water.

He states, "For ease of calculation, the cube will be completely filled in three rounds." The cube is 10′ × 10′ × 10′, which equals 1,000 cubic feet. There are 7.48 gallons in one cubic foot, so it will take 7,480 gallons of water to fill the *forcecube.* The *decanter of endless water* operating at full strength (geyser: 30 gallons a round) would take 249 rounds to fill the cube. It would take a rate of 2,493 gallons a round to fill the cube in three rounds.

In this scenario, after three rounds trapped in the cube, the PCs would have little more than their boots wet.

Christopher Putnam
Vail, Colorado

The editors have gone off to seal themselves into a forcecube.

Your Wishes Fulfilled

I agree with Steve Kurtz's point of view in issue #42 about psionics. Placing a psionicist in a traditional AD&D® campaign would be akin to introducing rifles and cannons to a single kingdom during that time period. To correct this, all that it needs is (as Steve stated) the correct background and changes in the campaign. I disagree with the viewpoint against printing adventures containing psionics. Converting a psionic adventure by replacing the psionics with appropriate magic is about as time consuming as replacing the space in a SPELLJAMMER® adventure with water.

Lastly, I would like it if there were more DARK SUN adventures in your magazine. Dragons also seem a bit rare, so an adventure or two containing them might add spice. One last thing that I think might be an interesting addition is a module-writing contest; you'd print the winner in DUNGEON magazine. Or maybe just have your readers vote on the year's three best adventures.

Evan Hohlfeld
Blue Bell, Pennsylvania

This very issue contains one adventure that answers your requests for more psionics and more dragons. Steve Kurtz's "Into the Silver Realm" features not one but two *dragons, and a whole battalion of psionically endowed githyanki. Have fun!*

When you think about it, every issue of DUNGEON Adventures is a module-writing contest. Since anyone can send us an adventure, the "winners" of the contest are authors of the modules you see in print each issue. I'm not sure how a special contest would be any different than our usual procedure of picking the best adventures we can to print for our readers.

If anyone would like to submit an adventure, the first step is to request our writer's guidelines. Send a business-size self-addressed stamped envelope to DUNGEON Guidelines, P.O. Box 111, Lake Geneva WI 53147. If you are writing from outside the U.S.A., please enclose sufficient International Reply Coupons (available at your post office).

Ω

JACOB'S WELL

BY RANDY MAXWELL

Some ports are more dangerous than the storm.

Artwork by Terry Pavlet

Randy writes: "I was buying some dog food the other day when I noticed a display of Sigourney-Weaver-flavored alien chow. I immediately thought, 'There's an idea!' While this module may not be to everyone's taste, the little frontier fort and its NPCs can be used in toto *for an adventure of the DM's own design. After all, adventures serve several functions besides just being adventures. They generate ideas, provide NPCs, and supply locales and treasures. And the good ones are just plain fun to read!"*

"Jacob's Well" is an AD&D® adventure for one Dungeon Master and one player. The PC may be of any class or alignment, but should be of levels 2-4. A 2nd-level PC should have above-average ability scores, especially Constitution and Strength.

The adventure can be located in any cold, forested wilderness. DMs using the WORLD OF GREYHAWK® setting will find the Burneal, southern Hraak, or northern Fellreev forests excellent locations for the module. DMs using the FORGOTTEN REALMS® campaign can locate the adventure in Lurkwood east of Mirabar, the Moonwood north of Silverymoon, or the Coldwood due north of Sundabar. Those DMs not wishing to use the adventure may still find the trading post called Jacob's Well a convenient safe haven to drop into any wilderness area.

This adventure uses a "Sequence of Events" rather than set encounters. The DM should become thoroughly familiar with the layout of the trading post, the many NPCs, the creature used in the scenario, and the "Sequence of Events" before running the module.

Adventure Background

Before play begins, decide why the PC is traveling alone. Perhaps he is the forward scout or trailblazer of his party, marking a path for the others to follow. The PC may have become separated from his group and is lost. He may be on a quest or returning from a one.

Whatever the case, the PC is far from any known shelter and fleeing before an oncoming winter storm. It doesn't take a ranger to figure out that the boiling black clouds and howling north wind mean trouble. Struggling desperately through the trees, the PC stumbles into an open glade. The welcome smell of

wood smoke drifts on the wind, and the traveler can see the comfort of a light ahead.

For the DUNGEON MASTER™

The PC has stumbled onto a small fortified trading post named Jacob's Well. No one remembers who originally dug the well, but the site has been (at various times over the past 100 years) a logging camp, a fur trappers' camp, and an orc encampment.

For the past several years it has been a trading post in the hands of a half-orc named Jacob and has come to be called Jacob's Well. It is used primarily by fur trappers and occasionally by adventuring parties, as it is the only sign of civilization for many miles.

The comfort and welcome of Jacob's Well will soon turn very cold indeed. The PC's fate has led him to the little fort just in time to be involved in the horrors about to unfold there. One of the other guests is the unwitting host of a baby red slaad. If the PC stays at the trading post, he may witness the terrible aftermath of the birth of a red slaad and may have to choose between risking death by winter storm or the creature's hunger. While the winter storm keeps the patrons trapped in the trading post, the newborn slaad stalks the compound and survival becomes a hard-won and precious commodity.

During the course of this adventure, the DM is free to move the NPCs anywhere he wishes, so long as they are where they are supposed to be when the boxed text is read. The primary location for any NPC will be either the main hall (area 8) or one of the inn bedrooms.

The DM may find it easier to keep track of the location of the many NPCs if he uses miniatures, tokens, or small pieces of paper marked with the NPCs' initials. However, the PC should not be privy to this information. The sudden removal of an NPC from the map may give away information before the DM wishes.

Ideas for defense or hunting the creature should come primarily from the PC, who should be encouraged to actively search out the slaad. If the PC waits for the slaad to come to him, he will have a long wait and will then be faced with a powerful creature. However, several of the NPCs can recommend common-sense tactics, such as always moving about in pairs, everyone sleeping in the main hall, etc. The alignment of the NPC offering suggestions is important, as most of the NPCs are interested in their own survival rather than the group's. An NPC (especially the orc chief Tonazk and Jacob) may wish to use someone else as monster-bait and will not be overly concerned with the bait's survival.

It is important to remember and use the thieflike abilities of the slaad. Any survivors of a slaad attack will stress how the thing came up silently and suddenly lunged out of the shadows.

To create a mood of paranoia and fear, the DM need only use a few rat or snow slide encounters (see "Jacob's Well Encounters"). A giant rat can suddenly jump on the PC while an NPC screams, "It's on your back! It's on your back!!" A large amount of snow suddenly sliding off the roof can momentarily pin the PC face down on the ground. While pinned under the heavy snow, the PC lies helpless as he hears something approach. Luckily, it is only an NPC come to help him (this time).

Such minor incidents can be effective in creating the proper atmosphere. As the adventure progresses, a rat scuttling through a shadowy corner may illicit a major over-reaction from the PC.

The slaad's hiding places include the main house chimney (baby slaad only), latrine, stable, smithy, the barracks (after they have burned), and any other place the DM deems an adequate hiding place (such as the guard posts after the guards abandon the fort; see "Day Two, Morning"). It is unlikely the slaad will attempt to hide in the courtyard well. Unlike the chimney, there is no escape for the slaad should it be discovered there. Also, the slaad will not leave the fort because it needs the population of Jacob's Well for food.

As the hunt for the slaad continues, it may be discovered in one of these hiding places. It is up to the DM to move the slaad once it is discovered, and the DM should preplan the slaad's next move should its current hiding place be rendered untenable.

Sequence of Events

The action of this adventure takes place over a period of three days, divided into rough time periods of morning, evening, and night. These time periods are approximately eight hours each but are kept deliberately vague to allow the DM

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Jacob's Well Encounters
(Roll 2d6)

Encounter rolls should be made every time the PC leaves the main house and enters a building other than the main house (the latrine, stable, etc.). If the PC leaves the main house for the stable, the DM should roll either when the PC actually leaves the main house or when he enters the stable, not both.

The winter cold drives away or kills such things as giant centipedes, giant spiders, and other smaller pests usually inhabiting the odd corners of a compound like Jacob's Well. Therefore, in winter, unexpected encounters are rare and extremely limited. The DM is responsible for the logical placement of the encounters. Rats should be encountered in the stable or some other building, and a snow slide will not occur in the center of the courtyard. Therefore, the DM is free to choose an encounter rather than roll for one. The DM can have a great deal of fun with judicious use of giant and common rats.

2 **Slaad** or **No Encounter:** If the slaad is encountered, use the appropriate statistics (baby, young, or adult). If the DM does not wish to have the slaad to show up at the moment, treat as no encounter.

3-4 **Common rats** (1-4): INT animal; AL N; AC 7; MV 15; HD ¼; hp 1 each; THAC0 20; #AT 1; Dmg 1; SA disease; SZ T; ML 3; XP 7; MC1.

5-9 **Guard, NPC,** or **No Encounter:** This encounter can be as elaborate as a prolonged conversation with an NPC or as simple as nodding to a guard as he passes. However, because the snowstorm has driven nearly everyone and everything into hiding, the DM may wish to treat it as no encounter.

10-11 **Giant rats** (1-4): INT semi; AL N(E); AC 7; MV 12, swim 6; HD ½; hp 3 each; THAC0 20; #AT 1; Dmg 1-3; SA disease; SZ T; ML 6; XP 15; MC1.

12 **Snow slide:** The snow and ice collecting on the roof of a building suddenly give way and slide off the roof. Anyone underneath such a slide takes 1-4 hp damage from the falling chunks of ice and is *stunned* for 1-6 rounds.

Jacob's Well

The trading post is built on a low hill giving the guards on the palisades an excellent view of the area near the fort and a wide killing ground should it be attacked. The guards routinely keep the encircling meadow clear of brush, saplings, or anything else that might obstruct their view. The sight of the little fort in the midst of a well-tended meadow would be pleasant except for the large graveyard near its gates.

The prices that Jacob charges for goods and services are high (at least double and sometimes triple the prices listed on page 67 of the *Player's Handbook*).

1. Graveyard. The graveyard occupies a large area just south of the fort. It has purposely been placed near the gate so that anyone entering the trading post must see it. Many of the graves are marked with small wooden placards bearing the name and race of the occupant. Others placards are marked "Unknown Halfling" or "Unknown Human" (the grave's occupant was killed before anyone knew his name). Some markers carry crude poems and epitaphs such as: "Here lies a sound sleeper/Surprised in bed by the grim reaper/This shallow grave will be his keeper/'Cause we didn't feel like digging deeper." Many of the epitaphs make ribald jests about the person's demise, and some are so blatantly obscene as to make an orc blush.

These are the graves of those who failed to follow the rules laid down by the owner of Jacob's Well. The house rules are simple: No fighting inside the walls, and no stealing. The graves are a silent testament to just how rigorously the rules are enforced.

2. Gates. The heavy wooden gates of Jacob's Well are always closed and barred with a large wooden plank that can be removed and replaced by one man. This prevents anything or anyone from making a sudden dash into the compound. And, more important from the owner's point of view, it prevents anyone from making a sudden dash out of the compound without first paying his bill. If the fort is attacked or under siege, a heavy beam is hoisted into place across the gates.

There are always two guards on duty at the gate (see area 4). The gate guards carefully look over anyone seeking entry,

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as much latitude as possible in the timing of a particular event. Thus, two events can happen in a short space of time, one late at night and the second early in the morning, or the same events can be separated by several hours. In this way, the DM can create the proper atmosphere of anticipation and suspense.

The events taking place at Jacob's Well revolve around a particular creature, a red slaad (see sidebar). If the slaad is caught or killed, no further events take place. After the evening of Day One, the DM is free to rearrange events as he pleases, but care should be taken not to reveal too much too soon. Otherwise, the sense of mystery, menace, and imminent danger is greatly diminished.

Day One

Morning: The PC arrives at Jacob's Well. The DM is free to either describe the main hall (area 8) and the NPCs there or to role-play the encounters. The DM may find it easier to role-play only one or two of the NPCs in the main hall and, through them, impart information concerning the others. In any case, the DM should emphasize the rules, as posted behind the bar, in order to discourage the PC from attempting to fight any of the other guests. If the PC insists on fighting, Jacob instantly and unhesitatingly opens fire with his crossbows. The PC must kill or subdue both his opponent and Jacob to survive. If the PC survives such a fight, the adventure can continue, but the PC is in a much weaker position.

About an hour after the PCs's arrival at Jacob's Well, the storm hits with a vengeance. This wild and unpredictable winter gale sweeps over the area of Jacob's Well with heavy snow and high winds (see roll of 31-80 on weather chart below). Unless otherwise indicated, the DM can determine the exact weather conditions by rolling 1d100 and consulting the following chart:

01-30 Calm period of light to moderate snow and light to moderate winds. Missile fire and spell-casting have normal chances of success, and the storm causes no physical damage. For visibility, see "Fog, light or snow," Table 62 on page 117 of the *PH*. This calm period lasts for 2-8 hours; then roll 1d100 again.

31-80 Heavy snow, high wind. All missile fire is at −2 and reduced to half normal range, 50% chance of spell failure due to buffeting wind. Visibility is treated as "Fog, moderate" on Table 62 (as above). Anyone venturing out into the storm takes 2 hp damage per hour regardless of protective clothing. Shelter (this includes the guard posts and stable), natural immunity (such as that of a frost giant), or magical protection negates the damage. These weather conditions last for 2-8 hours.

81-00 Blizzard conditions of very heavy snow and very high wind. Missile fire impossible, 80% chance of spell failure due to buffeting wind. Visibility is treated as "Fog, dense or blizzard" on Table 62 (as above) and the damage caused by the storm increases to 3 hp per hour. These conditions last 1-4 hours.

The DM is free to choose the current weather and to lengthen or shorten the duration of any weather condition. However, care should be taken to avoid prolonged periods (24 hours or more) of any particular type. There should be at least one calm period and one blizzard in every 24 hours. If these do not occur randomly, the DM should insert them.

Evening: Everyone is in the main hall (area 8) eating, drinking, talking, or merely listening to the storm outside. Jacob is at the bar serving drinks, Ubbi is in the kitchen singing some obscene sea chantey to himself, and Begley is bustling about serving food and drinks to the patrons.

> It feels good to have food on the table and walls between you and the wind. The roaring fire in the fireplace and sputtering torches on the walls throw fantastical shadows about the room. As the little halfling serves your food, his shadow seems to waltz through a kaleidoscope of red and yellow light. There is the soft murmur of quiet talk among the patrons, and occasional snatches of singing from the kitchen. The air in the room is warm and wood scented. It is almost cozy, and several guests nod drowsily over their tankards and mugs.
>
> Suddenly, everyone is sitting bolt upright. From upstairs comes such an anguished scream of agony and terror that the very sound of it is painful to hear. The scream seems to

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Red Slaad

Red slaadi are great froglike beings that dwell on the outer plane of Limbo. An adult slaad has a huge head, a large mouth filled with sharp teeth, and two extremely sharp clawed hands. Slaadi speak their own language but have a special telepathy that allows them to converse with all things. They are vicious combatants that are quick to attack all other creatures. They are ruthless and cruel, and often enjoy tormenting their victims before killing them.

Adult red slaadi have a special egg-producing gland under the skin of each claw. A hit by one of these claws has a 25% chance to implant an egg-pellet in an opponent's body. The egg-pellet moves through the victim's body—often without the victim knowing he is infected with the pellet—until it reaches the chest cavity. There the egg gestates for three months, forming a baby red slaad. Once formed, the creature eats its way out of the host's body, killing him. The victim falls extremely ill 24 hours before the baby slaad eats its way out. The egg-pellet can be detected by only a *detect evil* spell and destroyed by a *remove curse* or similar magic.

Once the baby slaad is free of its host, it is a cunning, ravenous killer that matures rapidly (within 36 hours) into a young slaad and finally into an adult red slaad. The transformation from baby to adult slaad is much the same as the change of a tadpole into a frog. However, in the case of the slaad, the change is very rapid and there is a molting or shedding of the old skin before the transformation to the new form is complete. The skin shed by the slaad in its transformations can be used as an ingredient in potions of *vitality* and potions of *growth*. Such skin is worth 1,000 gp per pound.

Use the following statistics for the various stages of slaad development (baby, young, and adult):

Red slaad, baby: INT low; AL CN; AC 6; MV 12; HD 4+3; hp 21; THAC0 17; #AT 3; Dmg 1-2/1-2/2-8; SD thief abilities MS 55%, HS 50%, DN 60%, CW 85%; regeneration; MR 10%; SZ M (4'); ML 10; XP 420; MC8.

The baby slaad has a dull gray and murky pink piebald coloration when first born. It looks something like a tadpole. The head contains a large maw of vicious teeth. It has two small, strong forelimbs, two weak, almost useless hind limbs, and a long, flexible tail. It moves by wriggling the tail like a snake and pulling itself forward with its forelimbs. At this stage, the baby slaad is sometimes mistaken for a small yuan-ti half-breed.

A baby slaad has some of the powers and abilities of an adult slaad, but in a less powerful form. It regenerates only 1 hp per melee round, and has a magic resistance of only 10%. However, the baby slaad compensates with other natural survival abilities (treated as thief abilities). Baby slaadi are able to move silently 55% of the time, hide in shadows with only a 50% chance of detection, detect noise 60% of the time, and (with its taloned forelimbs) climb walls or virtually any other vertical surface with an 85% chance of success.

While the baby slaad's Intelligence is low, its cunning is high. It boldly attacks only if the victim is obviously wounded or weaker than itself. It also prefers to attack only one opponent at a time and avoids groups. In combat, the creature uses its thieflike abilities to ambush and surprise victims. If the DM wishes to use a fast-paced approach to combat, allow the slaad to surprise on a 1-5 on 1d10. Otherwise, use the thief ability percentages to determine if a victim is surprised or has heard or spotted the slaad before it attacks.

In any case, baby slaadi are perpetually hungry eating machines, and their favorite food is fresh, preferably live, meat. However, they are not particularly fond of horse meat or mule steaks and eat such only if nothing else is available.

Red slaad, young: INT low; AL CN; AC 5; MV 9; HD 5+3; hp 26; THAC0 15; #AT 3; Dmg 1-3/1-3/2-12; SD thief abilities MS 35%, HS 30%, DN 40%, CW 50%; regeneration; MR 20%; SZ M (6'); ML 10; XP 650; MC8.

At this stage of development, the slaad appears much more slaadi-like than in its baby "tadpole" form. It begins to take on the distinctive red coloring of its species, and the tail is little more than a vestigial stub. The legs are now strong, but the creature must still bend over and use its arms (run on all fours) to reach a movement rate of 9. If the creature uses its legs only, it moves at MV 6.

During this adolescent period, the slaad begins to lose the survival abilities of its former stage but has yet to gain adult status. Its ability to move silently, hide in shadows, and detect noise are all reduced. As it grows, it becomes a heavier and clumsier creature, reducing its ability to climb walls. Adolescent slaadi are able to move silently 35% of the time, hide in shadows with a 30% chance of detection, detect noise 40% of the time, and climb any vertical surface with a 50% chance of success.

However, this transitional stage between baby and adult is not without benefits. The creature regenerates 2 hp per melee round, and its magic resistance is increased to 20%. The creature is no longer ravenous but still prefers freshly killed meat when it is hungry. It is also slightly bolder at this stage, relying less on ambush and surprise and more on its own strength and abilities. If it feels it has the advantage, it is now willing to attack a group of two or three.

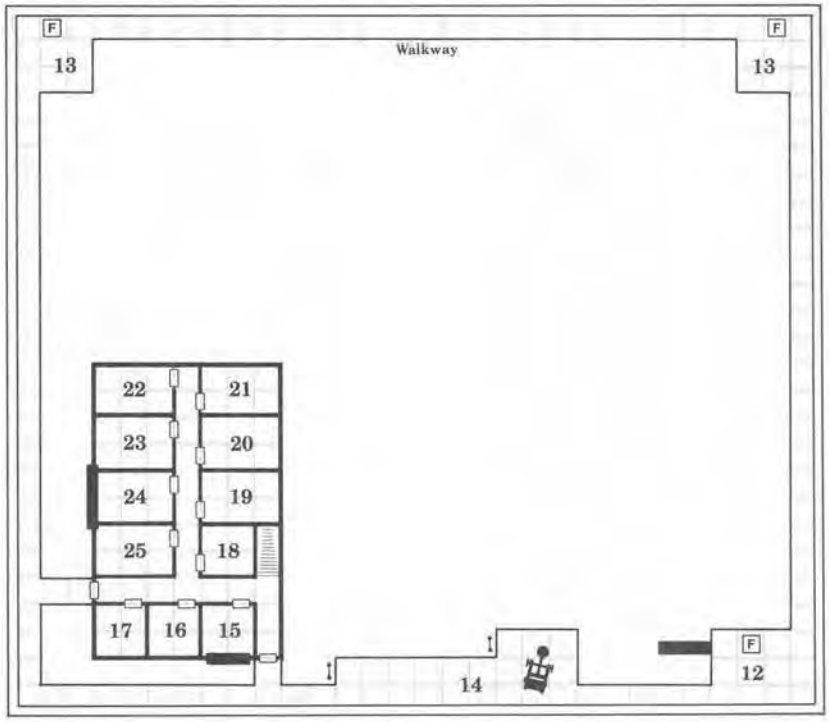
Red slaad, adult: INT low; AL CN; AC 4; MV 6; HD 7+3; hp 35; THAC0 13; #AT 3; Dmg 1-4/1-4/2-16; SA stun, implant egg-pellet; SD regeneration; MR 30%; SZ L (8'); ML 10; XP 7,500; MC8.

At this stage, the tail has vanished and the survival abilities of the younger stages have been replaced by the full powers of the adult creature. The adult red slaad's coloration varies from dark brick red to bright crimson. It now regenerates 3 hp per melee round, has 30% magic resistance, and produces the egg-pellets implanted by its claw attacks. In addition, the creature can emit a loud *stunning* croak once per day. This croak affects all opponents within 20' of the slaad. Victims must make a saving throw vs. petrification or be incapacitated for two rounds. It also can attempt to *gate* in one or two additional red slaadi twice per day with a 35% chance of success.

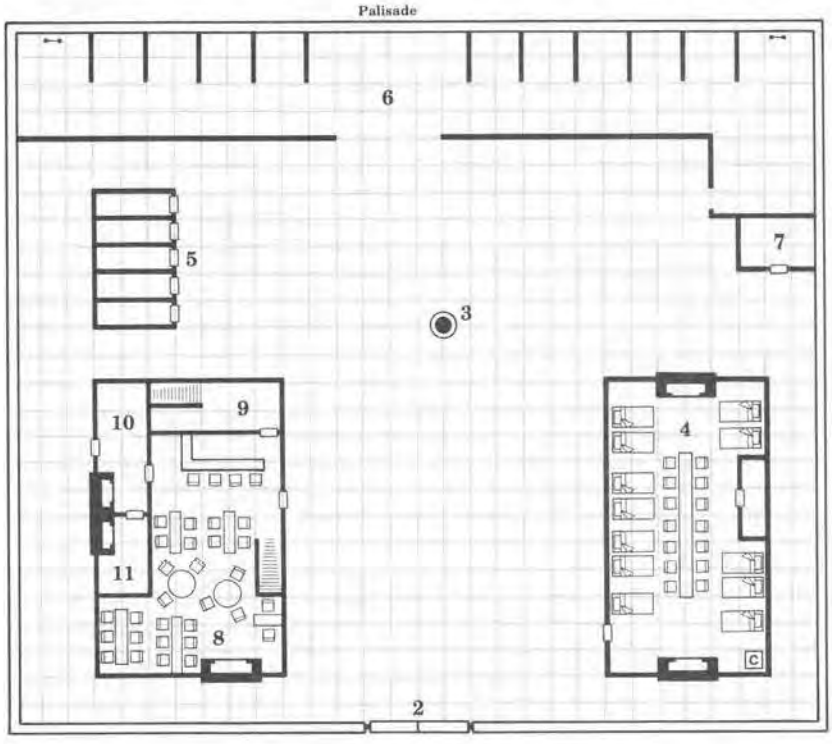
Jacob's Well

1 square = 5′

Upper Level



Ground Level



Lower Level

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echo for several minutes. It makes your hair stand on end and your flesh crawl. Then, just as suddenly as it began, the scream stops.

Everyone is now standing, looking at the top of the stairs. A smashing crash, like the sound of glass and wood giving way all at once, is followed by the thud of something hitting the ground outside. Then the only sounds are the crackling of the fire and the howling of the storm.

The two barbarians are the first to shake off the paralyzing effect of the scream. With a great shout of, "Njal! Njal, we are coming!" the two barbarians run up the stairs.

The barbarians charge up the steps, with Gaylord and Drenla close behind. The guard upstairs (area 17) begins shouting for Jacob, who comes out from behind the bar with his heavy crossbow. Jacob orders Ubbi and Begley to look after the bar, then heads upstairs. Chief Tonazk sends Ax upstairs to investigate, but he and Kazickerk remain in the main hall. The fur tappers remain in the main hall as well.

The PC is free to either go upstairs to investigate the scream or remain behind in the main hall. If the PC attempts to pick the lock or enter the room behind the bar, Ubbi and Begley inform Jacob (if he doesn't know already from the sound of the clanking cowbell), and the PC is dealt with summarily as a thief. If the PC or an NPC investigates the thud heard outside, he finds one of the upstairs window shutters in the courtyard.

If the PC does not go upstairs, Jacob returns after a few minutes and describes the scene. If the PC goes upstairs, he sees the following in the barbarian's room (area 25):

There are several people huddled around a doorway, attempting to see into the room. As you push your way to the front, you see the two barbarians standing grief stricken in the center of the room. A third barbarian, the one called Njal, is definitely dead. His face is frozen in a terrible mask of fear and pain. Most horrible of all, his chest has been literally ripped open and the room is awash in gore.

Whatever did this deed left via the window. There is a trail of blood from the corpse to the window sill, and the window has been smashed. One wooden shutter is loose and banging loudly in the wind; the other shutter lies in the courtyard below. The arctic wind is blowing ferociously through the opening and filling the room with ice-cold air and snow.

Jacob turns on the upstairs guard and demands, "What in the name of wonder happened here?"

The guard replies, "I gots no ideer. I come arunnin' when I heerd that awful scream. I found the room like you sees it." Jacob merely shrugs, orders the nervous guard back to his post, and tries to reassure his patrons. "Whatever it was, it's gone now. I wish it wouldn't of smashed my windows." With hardly a glance to spare for the barbarians, Jacob turns and tromps down the stairs to the main hall.

The barbarians soon recover their composure and ask everyone else to leave. They refuse all help with the body and do not allow anyone to inspect the corpse or even touch their fallen comrade. After gently stretching their friend out on a mattress, they begin softly chanting the burial songs of their people.

Gaylord has been examining the corpse from a distance and notes the wound is unusual. He points out several major organs, namely the heart and lungs, appear to be missing. But, without being able to closely inspect the body he is not certain, so he too merely shrugs and returns to the main hall.

Guards from the other posts have arrived downstairs, and Jacob asks if they saw or heard anything. None of the guards admit to seeing anything, due to the blowing snow. They all say they heard nothing but a scream and a window being smashed. Jacob orders them back to their posts with the command, "Keep your eyes open! Something unfriendly's loose." He then brings up a hammer, nails, and boards from the cellar and orders Ubbi and Begley to board up the damaged window.

This terrible scene began three months earlier when Njal was searching for a cache of magical weapons rumored to be hidden near the shore of a subterranean lake. There he was surprised by a red slaad messenger on its way to a secret slaadi slave-taking

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because Jacob wants no deadbeats or beggars hanging about his fort. Anyone entering must have furs, a horse, armor and weapons, goods of some kind, or a spell book to be confiscated if the person is unable to pay for his stay.

3. Courtyard. The courtyard is nothing but bare dirt. In wet weather it is a sodden, slippery mud-hole. In dry weather it is a dusty, barren patch of ground. When it snows the courtyard is dangerous. The great wagon ruts and holes gouged in the yard during wet weather become filled with snow and impossible to see. There is a 10% chance that anyone moving through the courtyard trips and falls into one of these unseen obstacles.

In the center of the courtyard is a covered well of fresh water. This is the well from which the trading post derives its name. Water from the well is cold, sweet, and refreshing.

4. Barracks. This long, narrow, windowless building is the barracks for the fort's garrison. It contains 14 rough sleeping benches covered with straw mattresses, fireplaces at the north and south ends, a long table with accompanying benches and chairs down the center of the room, and a communal storage closet on the eastern wall. The closet holds several blankets, a couple of tattered quilts, and a small, almost-full keg of lamp oil (used for flaming catapult ammunition, see area 14 below). The guards keep any valuables with them at all times.

The guards are a motley crew of humans, half bandit and half adventurer. They receive room and board, and a silver piece a month in wages. The morale of the guards is fairly low, and the turnover rate among them is high. Unless they are wanted outlaws, few stay longer than a single winter.

But elite, well-disciplined troops with high morale are not necessary for the job. The mere look of a well-manned palisade is enough to thwart many attackers. At present, there are only 12 guards at Jacob's Well. Six are always on duty at the various guard posts and the other six can usually be found here in the barracks. In fair weather the guards take four-hour shifts, but in bad weather they reduce it to two-hour shifts.

Guards (12): AL any; AC 7; MV 9; F2 (×5), F1 (×7); hp 11 (F2), 5 (F1); THAC0 19, 20; #AT 1; Dmg by weapon

type; ML 9; ring mail, heavy crossbow, short sword, dagger.

5. Storage and Armory. These small storage areas are nothing but small cubicles with sturdy walls and a roof. A cubicle can be rented for 1 gp a week, or 2 gp a week with a lock.

One space is filled with a large amount of coal for use in the smithy (see area 6), unworked metal bars and pieces of iron for making horseshoes or repairing armor, and a small keg of lamp oil for igniting the coal. It also contains hammers, tongs, and other metalworking tools.

Only one cubicle is locked. It also has a cowbell nailed to the door. When the door is opened, the cowbell clanks loudly and alerts the guards. This is the fort's armory and contains an odd assortment of weapons and armor, many of which were taken from those who now lie just outside the gates.

The armory contains: five suits of man-sized leather armor, one suit of dwarf-sized ring mail, three medium shields, three short bows, one long bow, a box with 50 flight arrows, one light crossbow, three heavy crossbows, an open box with about 100 light and heavy quarrels, a battle axe, three throwing axes, seven spears, six clubs, one lance, one mace, two war hammers, a whip, a scimitar, a long sword, two short swords, a two-handed bastard sword, and 12 daggers.

The weapons and armor are heaped in a jumbled pile. It takes at least one turn of sorting to find a particular weapon listed. The only exception is the box of crossbow quarrels, which is nailed to the back of the door. When the door is opened, the quarrels are instantly available.

6. Stable and Smithy. The stable, like everything else at Jacob's Well, offers a bare minimum of comfort for its occupants. There are no stable boys or grooms and there is no blacksmith. Patrons are expected to feed, water, and care for their own animals. However, because the guards use a large scythe to keep the meadow around the fort free of tall weeds and grasses, there is plenty of good fodder for animals.

A crude smithy at the eastern end of the stable contains a large fire pit with a bellows and an old beat-up and rusty anvil. Use of the stable and smithy costs 1 gp per day. Coal for the fire pit and iron bars for making horseshoes or enclave. Because it dared not be killed or injured in a fight before the message got through, the slaad did not stay and fight the barbarian. It merely slashed Njal across the back and disappeared under the dark waters of the lake.

The surprised barbarian was never sure what had attacked him and could tell his friends only that a large manlike thing with a big head delivered the wound to his back. The barbarians are therefore unable to identify or recognize the slaad loose in Jacob's Well as the same type of creature who attacked Njal months earlier.

The slaad's attack on Njal implanted an egg-pellet. The horror in the upstairs room is the gory aftermath of the birth of a red slaad. It is now roaming hungry and free through the trading post (for encounters with the creature, use the statistics for a baby red slaad).

After smashing through the window, the newborn slaad did not jump to the ground, but rather swung itself up onto the roof. If the ground under the window is inspected, anyone can see that only bits of broken glass and window frame can be found in the snow. Even if the blowing snow covered the creature's tracks, there should at least be an indentation where the creature hit the ground. However, as no one is yet sure if the creature broke into or out of the room (or even if there really is a creature), such evidence may not be immediately meaningful.

The slaad regenerates hit points faster than the winter storm can deliver damage, so it is not at risk of freezing to death. However, it finds the cold uncomfortable, and it also prefers to stay out of sight. After leaving the barbarians' room via the roof, it hides in the chimney of the main hall fireplace. Its strong claws are fastened securely to the rough stones of the chimney, and it hangs just inside the mouth, warmed by the rising smoke but not suffocated by it. The kitchen/scullery chimney is too small to be used by the slaad.

If the PC ventures onto the steep roof of the main house, he must make a Dexterity check every round or lose his footing and fall off the roof for 2d6 hp damage. Dexterity checks are made by rolling Dexterity or less on 1d20 with a penalty of −1 for light to moderate snow conditions, −2 for heavy snow conditions, or −3 for blizzard conditions. No NPC is willing to attempt such dangerous rooftop exploits.

The baby slaad need not make Dexterity checks. It anchors itself with its claws while it wriggles along. If the PC makes it to the chimney, there is a 95% chance to discover the slaad. If discovered, it simply drops into the fire below, taking 2d8 hp damage from the fall and the fire. It then flees the main hall via the door or by smashing through a window and hides somewhere in the compound (see "For the Dungeon Master" for probable locations).

The creature's actions (falling into the fire, running for the door, or smashing through a window) surprise everyone in the main hall, and they are unable to pursue for two rounds.

Gaylord Hightor (or the PC, if he too is a ranger or has a tracking proficiency) may attempt to track the slaad, but due to the storm he does so with a heavy penalty. For tracking attempts use Table 39 on page 64 of the *PH*. The following modifiers always apply for every tracking attempt throughout this adventure: "Poor lighting" (due to the storm) and "Tracked party attempts to hide trail" (the slaad does not attempt to hide its tracks, but the heavy snowfall and windblown snow induce this penalty). The DM can consult Table 39 for other bonuses and penalties as applicable.

The barbarians are soon finished honoring their fallen comrade and begin a revenge-minded room-by-room search of the trading post. They have angry words with Jacob because he refuses to allow them in the cellar. He points out he has just been in the cellar and nothing is there. He also demonstrates, by opening the door, that if anything had entered the cellar, they would have heard the clanking cowbell on the back of the door. This mollifies the barbarians' suspicions, and they carry their search outside to the courtyard, stable, and other areas of the trading post. Finding nothing, they eventually return to the main hall, where they sit in a corner sulkily drinking mugs of beer.

Meanwhile, the other guests have been excitedly talking among themselves. Virtually everyone has made a thorough search of the upstairs. The only things found are empty rooms and the barbarian's fur wrapped corpse placed on a mattress under the now-boarded-up window. Whatever killed the barbarian has disappeared.

Everyone in the main hall has a theory on what happened. Chief Tonazk believes the man was killed by some mysterious curse. Drenla, the fur trappers, Ubbi, and Begley believe something broke into the room and killed the barbarian. Gaylord has no opinion, because the circumstances are so strange he just doesn't know.

The PC can believe or disbelieve any of the theories or propose a theory himself. But, unless the PC has had experience with slaadi, he should not know exactly what is happening.

Night: Eventually, the excitement over the awful event eases, and one by one the guests get sleepy and take a room (DM's choice on who goes where. Chief Tonazk and his bodyguards use adjacent but separate rooms). Nothing unusual is seen or heard for the rest the night (unless the PC encounters the slaad). The wind and snow continue to batter the trading post.

The heavy snowfall makes it impossible to tell time accurately. It is near sunrise, but still very dark, when the sounds of confused shouting come from the courtyard. As you rouse yourself from an uneasy sleep on the flea-infested mattress, one word is becoming clearer and clearer. "Fire!"

If the PC stays in his room, Gaylord pounds loudly on the door as he rushes past, yelling, "Come help! Fire!" If the PC responds to the alarm and rushes downstairs, he sees that the guard barracks are burning.

The barracks are alight from one end to the other. In the dark, tongues of flame peep out here and there, and a great sheet of flame blocks the doorway. Luckily, rapidly melting snow is raining down from the roof onto the flames.

Judging from the small size of the crowd in the courtyard, few of those in the barracks got out. Jacob and the others have formed a bucket brigade from the well to the barracks and are rapidly dousing the building with water.

Whether the PC helps or not, the fire is soon out, and only thick black smoke boils out the door of the barracks. The barracks and the tower (areas 4 and 12) still stand, but the building has been gutted by the fire. There is no longer anything of use in the barracks. Luckily, the keg of lamp oil in the barracks closet did not explode, though it burned intensely. There is now a hole in the eastern wall where the storage closet used to be (the DM should mark the hole's location on the map at this time).

The seven remaining guards make quick forays into the smoky interior and bring out the bodies of their companions. Only four bodies are found in the ruins; no guard or body is found in the barracks tower, nor any trace of where he went. However, an empty keg of lamp oil is found in the guard post, and the loose chimney stone used by the guards for warming their hands is lying near it.

A quick inventory of the storage cubicles confirms the keg of lamp oil is the one stored with the metal-working implements. It is obvious that someone stole the oil and poured it directly into the chimney via the loose stone, deliberately killing the guards. Jacob is incensed at the news, and the other guards are grumbling loudly about it.

Suspicion falls immediately on the missing tower guard. It appears he killed his fellows and has either escaped into the storm or is hiding somewhere in the compound. If anyone points out that the guard could not possibly have had anything to do with the barbarian's death, Jacob's response is, "One problem at a time, boys. Let's solve this problem first!"

Jacob tries to organize a thorough search of the entire compound. If the frightened PC convinces others to stay together in the main hall, the slaad contents itself with attacking a defenseless pack mule or horse. If a guard is not mounted in the stables, the animals are attacked and eaten one by one, and the slaad's tracks in the stable after each attack grow larger. The baby or young slaad will not attack a group of more than three victims.

If the search isn't overruled, Jacob provides his guests with some help. At the storage cubicles, he unlocks the armory (area 5) and, with the understanding they must give it back when the emergency is over, allows everyone to choose an extra weapon or equip themselves with better armor if they need it. Shagath, Terth, and Xavick take suits of leather armor but arm themselves with their own hunting gear (treat as long bows with 20 flight arrows each). Ubbi chooses a short sword repairing armor must be purchased from Jacob's stores (quantity and prices at DM's discretion). Jacob also rents hammer and tongs for 1 sp per day for the set.

7. Latrine. This outhouse is little more than a lean-to shed tacked onto the side of the smithy. It is a nasty four-seater that does not invite a long stay. In summer the outhouse reeks suffocatingly and attracts swarms of insects. In winter the unheated room is bitterly cold, and the term "rosy cheeks" takes on a new meaning.

Main Building, Ground Floor

8. Main Hall. The main hall is a large room dominated at the north end by the bar. Doors on the east and west walls lead to the courtyard (area 3) and the kitchen (area 10). Large windows overlook the courtyard when their shutters are opened. The southern wall holds a large fireplace. Great bundles of wood are stored under the stairs, and several larger logs lie against the eastern wall. Scattered about the room are a number of roughly made tables and chairs. The floor is covered with dirt, sawdust, and rancid food.

The bar is a large, heavy construction of thick oaken planks that have been rubbed smooth over the years by the constant coming and going of customers. Originally unfinished and unpainted, the bar is now covered in great multicolored blotches of thousands of spilled drinks.

Two cocked and loaded light crossbows are hidden behind the bar (one at either end). The bar also conceals a large cudgel, three large tankards holding 10 quarrels each, and a cocked and loaded heavy crossbow with a large board bolted to the front of it. When this heavy crossbow is placed on the bar, the archer is 90% hidden behind the bar and board (see Table 59: Cover and Concealment Modifiers, *PH*, page 99). It is this very crossbow that has helped fill so many of the graves at the fort's front gate.

On the wall behind the bar, a large sign lettered in Common, orcish, dwarven, and elven reads, "No fighting. No stealing. Or else." Given the size of the graveyard out front, the "Or else" is self-explanatory. Under the sign are several shelves loaded with mugs and tankards of various sizes and shapes.

There are several kegs and casks behind the bar, but they all hold either cheap homemade beer or a kind of thin, watery rum brought up from the south. The bar is always manned by Jacob Nazakak, the owner and bartender of this establishment.

Jacob Nazakak: AL LE; AC 9; MV 12; F4; hp 22; THAC0 17; #AT 1; Dmg by weapon type; D 15, I 15, Ch 7; ML 14; heavy crossbow, cudgel, three daggers.

Jacob is a half-orc but looks like a very ugly human male. He is dour, rude, and taciturn. Jacob's primary concern is Jacob. He has no loyalty to either the human or orcish side of his heritage. Jacob often says, "One gold piece spends like another, no matter whose pocket it's from." This means Jacob doesn't care who comes to the fort, so long as the customers mind the rules and have money to spend. Jacob is fluent in many orcish dialects as well as the Common tongue, and speaks a smattering of several dwarven and elven dialects.

Jacob always carries three knives, two for throwing and one long, thin, razor-sharp blade for hand-to-hand combat. However, he is not specialized in any weapon. In combat, Jacob attempts to use the crossbows under the bar, then his throwing knives, before closing with an opponent with cudgel or razor. Jacob is suspicious of everyone and everything. He suspects all visitors to his establishment—adventurer, fur trader, or wandering orc—are really after his strongbox (area 27).

In addition to Jacob, there are currently 10 guests in the main hall:

Guntra and **Hlutwulf:** AL CN; AC 6; MV 6; F2; hp 13, 11; THAC0 19; #AT 1; Dmg by weapon type; ML 15; hide armor, spear, battle axe, dagger.

These two hulking barbarians came in late last night carrying an ill friend. They do not know what is wrong with their companion. He was suddenly stricken while they were fleeing the storm. Because their friend was too ill to travel, they came to the fort to sit out the storm and let their companion rest in what comfort the post has to offer. The sick barbarian is currently upstairs in one of the guest rooms (see area 25). The barbarians are silent, suspicious, and ill at ease among so many strangers.

Shagath, Terth, and **Xavick:** AL LN; AC 9; MV 12; 0-level human; hp 4 each; THAC0 20; #AT 1; Dmg by weapon type; ML 8; knives.

These three human fur trappers have

and leather armor, and Begley chooses the mace (change all NPC statistics accordingly). Being sufficiently armed and armored, the barbarians, orcs, ranger, and mage take nothing from the armory. If the PC is in need of weapons or armor, he is free to choose from those items listed that are appropriate for his race and class.

> With everyone armed and ready, the search begins in earnest. Jacob leaves a guard at each of the guard posts. After the fire, they no longer need orders to "Keep their eyes open." The hunt continues through the compound, but nothing is found. Eventually, the only place left to search is the main house, and the hunters turn their attentions there.

The slaad is responsible for burning the barracks, not the unfortunate missing guard. When the slaad got tired of hiding, it went in search of prey. Taking stock of Jacob's Well, it decided there were just too many people to handle all at once. As it inspected the contents of the unlocked storage lockers, it found the lamp oil and formulated a plan to eliminate several opponents in one blow. Climbing up the chimney on the southern end of the barracks, it surprised and killed the guard while he was warming his hands at the loose stone, and devoured the unfortunate man. As the floor of the guard post was covered with snow blown in by the storm, the few traces of blood were washed away as the snow melted in the heat of the fire.

The slaad had intended to pour the oil directly down the chimney, but instead it used the hole so conveniently supplied by the guard. When the lamp oil hit the fire below, it immediately ignited. The flaming oil gushed out of the fireplace and cut the guards off from the door. In a matter of minutes, the straw mattresses were alight and the guards were doomed.

Immediately after emptying the keg, the slaad (under cover of the snowy darkness and using its abilities to move silently and hide in shadows), passed directly under the gate guards and hid between the main house and the western palisade. When the alarm sounded and the house emptied to fight the fire, the slaad slipped into the

kitchen and hid itself under the sacks of potatoes in the scullery (area 11). Use the slaad's hide in shadows percentage (50%) to determine whether the slaad is discovered.

The DM may direct one or more NPCs to search the main house. The PC may search where he wishes, with the restriction that only Jacob is allowed in the cellar. If the slaad is discovered, it attempts to escape the main house and find another hiding place elsewhere in the compound (DM's choice). If escape is impossible, it fights to the death.

Day Two

Morning: Everyone sits aloof, with thoughts turned inward. Yet all are alert, senses turned outward, straining to hear, see, or scent the slightest hint of danger. There is no talking except to occasionally order food or drink. Begley wanders about like a ghost, damned to forever serve the silent, sullen patrons.

> You shake off the drowsy warmth of the main hall and notice Begley is slowly descending the staircase with a puzzled look on his face. He looks about the room and asks, "Has anyone seen Ubbi?"
>
> There is a moment's buzz of excitement as everyone states the location they last saw the old cook. Then in a flurry, the barbarians, the orcs, the trappers, Gaylord, Drenla, Begley, and Jacob are up and looking. The upstairs, kitchen, scullery, and latrine are checked. Jacob even goes round the guard posts asking, but the guards have seen and heard nothing but snow and wind. Ubbi has disappeared.

The PC need not immediately jump up and look for Ubbi, though the NPCs will make an excited search for the cook. If the slaad was not found hiding under the potatoes on Day One, it has killed and devoured Ubbi as he was preparing lunch. If the slaad was driven from the kitchen, it surprised Ubbi in the latrine. In either case, Ubbi is gone forever.

After killing Ubbi, the slaad is hiding in the smithy (area 6). If discovered there, it attempts to retreat to the compound and another hiding place (DM's choice). If trapped, the creature fights to the death.

> Upon hearing the news of Ubbi's disappearance, the remaining guards revolt. Jagger, a spokesman for the guards, announces, "That's it. We've had enough. We're leaving!"
>
> At this Jacob gets angry and shouts, "Leaving!? You dratted fools can't go anywhere in this storm. You'll die!"
>
> "You blasted half-breed!" Jagger shouts, "We're not staying to die, just 'cause you're afraid someone might drink a beer and not pay for it!"
>
> Jacob makes a move for his crossbow, but Jagger says, "You needn't go for your crossbow, you bloody miser! You can put an arrow in my guts, but what about the rest of the boys? They'll cut you down before you get a second shot off!"
>
> Jacob lowers the crossbow as the other guards cluster close behind their spokesman. There follows a terrible argument with much cursing in both Common and orcish, but the guards cannot be dissuaded. There are just too many for Jacob to fight, bully, or bribe. The guards turn over their crossbows and what few other weapons belong to Jacob, pack their belongings and depart.
>
> Before leaving, Jagger announces to the guests, "We're taking our chances with the storm. At least we know what a storm is. You're all welcome to join us."
>
> Beyond the guards' hearing, Gaylord whispers, "If these cutthroats will abandon their employer when he needs them, they will certainly abandon a stranger on the trail." Upon hearing this, none of the patrons wishes to leave with the guards.

The PC is free to join the guards and abandon the trading post if he wishes. The guards depart in heavy snow rapidly turning into a blizzard. If the PC leaves with the guards, they trek through the storm for about an hour, then the guards attack the PC and attempt to steal anything of value.

If the PC survives this attack, see "Concluding the Adventure" for his chances of surviving the storm. The DM is free to choose the fate of the guards. If both the guards and the PC survive the storm, the DM has a ready-made future scenario. The PC can hunt down the guards, one by one, and seek retribution for their attack on him during

no armor but wear thick fur capes that provide a +1 to their armor class. They arrived early this morning, also fleeing the storm. They intend to sit out the blizzard, then continue on their way. Their furs, pelts, and hunting gear are locked in one of the storage rooms (area 5), and their three pack mules are in the stable. The trappers are cordial and polite if treated likewise. They talk mostly among themselves about fur prices at various markets and what they intend to do after they sell their furs.

Gaylord Hightor: AL NG; AC 7; MV 9; R2; hp 12; THAC0 19; #AT 1; Dmg by weapon type; S 15, D 14, C 14, I 12, W 15, Ch 13; ML 14; studded leather armor, short sword, long bow, knife.

Gaylord is a young human ranger who has no permanent home and wanders from forest to forest. As a ranger, Gaylord has chosen trolls as his enemy species. This gives him something in common with Tonazk Troll-killer, the orc chieftain (see below). Because of their mutual hatred for trolls, the two have a grudging respect for each other. Gaylord is a calm, competent, and patient hunter. He is friendly enough but, like most rangers after years of wandering alone, he remains silent for long periods of time.

Drenla Era: AL LN; AC 9; MV 12; M4; hp 12; THAC0 19 (24 with staff); #AT 1; Dmg by spell or weapon type; S 10, D 15, C 16, I 15, W 6, Ch 9; ML 10; dagger, quarterstaff, *ring of protection +1*. Spells: *magic missile, read magic, shield, flaming sphere, web.*

Drenla is an intelligent human mage, but not a particularly competent one. He is trigger-happy with his spells, often casting them before the most advantageous time to do so or before his friends and allies can get out of the way. This is especially infuriating to those he accidentally catches in his *flaming sphere* or *web* spell. Even though he has no talent for the quarterstaff, he carries one because he believes it makes him look wise and wizardly. In combat, he fights with the staff at a −5 nonproficiency penalty to attack rolls and often hits everything in sight except an opponent. Regardless of these shortcomings, Drenla sees himself as quite the wizard-warrior.

Chief Tonazk Troll-killer (orc): AL LE; AC 4; MV 9; HD 3; hp 15; THAC0 17; #AT 1; Dmg by weapon type +2; S 18, D 9, C 16, I 9, W 14, Ch 12; SZ M; ML 14; XP 65; MC1; *scimitar +1*, dagger, chain mail, shield.

Tonazk is a cunning adversary who tends to think more than he talks. Unlike many orcs, he relies as much on his wits as on his sword. He does not particularly care for humans or halflings, but he does not have any special grudge against them. He dislikes elves and detests dwarves and gnomes. He is haughty, arrogant, and self-centered, but he is not stupid. Tonazk sees the value of Jacob's small fort as a place of trade and contact with other races. He will not break the peace or allow his bodyguards to break it unless seriously provoked. (However, this does not stop him from waylaying or ambushing anyone leaving the fort if they have annoyed him).

Anyone seeking an audience with the chief must deal with his bodyguards first. Unless the chief cuts them short, they demand loudly and in rough Common, "Who dares seek the presence of the mighty chief Tonazk Troll-killer, ruler of the Kagazh clan, leader of the council of the Nine Tribes, and Terror of the Trolls." The DM may add other important-sounding titles and honorifics if he desires. Among other orcs, the chief may require his bodyguards to recite his titles many times and at almost every meeting as a kind of orcish one-upmanship. However, among the "lowly humans" at Jacob's Well, his bodyguards give only an initial recitation of his credits; he prefers to be addressed simply as Chief Tonazk thereafter.

Kazickerk and **Ax** (orcs): AL LE; AC 4; MV 9; HD 3; hp 16 each; THAC0 17; #AT 1; Dmg by weapon type +2; S 18; SZ M; ML 14; MC1; scimitar, spear, dagger, chain mail, shield.

These two orcs are the personal bodyguards of Chief Tonazk. They do as they are told and are not allowed to get into personal fights without his permission. They will cooperate with the PC and the NPCs of Jacob's Well if commanded to do so by their chief. Otherwise, they remain aloof and do not mingle with the other travelers.

As bodyguards, they must stand or fall by their chieftain. If they allow the chief to be killed and they somehow survive, they will be immediately put to death on their return to the tribe. They invariably place themselves between the chief and anyone approaching him and go before him into any battle. One guard is always outside the chief's door while Tonazk sleeps.

The bodyguards are not cowards, but the storm. In the meantime, the guards may have made powerful friends or become powerful themselves.

Evening: The departure of the guards has an unsettling effect on the patrons. With the number of inhabitants suddenly and drastically reduced, everyone is pondering which was the wisest choice—staying or going.

> Drenla and the fur trappers are upstairs, while the rest of the guests are in the main hall, which looks like an armed camp. Everyone is literally bristling with weapons. After the events of the day, the patrons and staff are jumpy, tired, and tense. The air is stifling and stale. Begley moves about the room serving food and drinks. His shadow no longer dances fantastically but stalks menacingly through a red-yellow nightmare.
>
> There is a sudden snow slide off the roof, louder than usual but nothing startling. The snow slides were unsettling at first, but as they increased in frequency, everyone soon recognized the sound and they ceased to be alarming. However, a muffled shout from upstairs follows immediately after the snow slide.
>
> This time there is no hesitation, and everyone is up and running for the stairs in an instant. At the top of the stairs, you see the mage's room is on fire. Drenla and the fur trappers furiously swat at the flames with blankets. The fire is quickly extinguished, for only the straw mattresses were alight. Everyone mills about the doorway, speculating on what happened and demanding explanations.

Drenla is tight lipped on the matter, but Xavick, one of the fur trappers, was in the hallway and saw what happened. He explains that he was heading back to his room when he heard the snow slide. Apparently, the mage was unnerved by the noise and thought he was under attack. He came running out into the hallway, turned, cast a *flaming sphere* spell, and sent the sphere rolling back into his room. The sphere immediately set the mattresses on fire. Realizing his mistake, the mage grabbed a blanket and shouted for Xavick to help.

Jacob is not amused and gives Drenla a cold stare. "As if I don't have enough troubles," he sneers, "now you're trying to burn down my business!" Then he stalks off downstairs.

The orcs are speaking to each other in orcish. Suddenly Chief Tonazk looks directly at Drenla and says "kyaka." At this remark, the two bodyguards guffaw loudly and the three follow Jacob. If asked to translate, Jacob can tell the PCs that "kyaka" has no direct translation from orcish to Common, but refers to someone stupid and clownish, someone to be made fun of and not to be respected.

Night:

> The snow slides continue, and there is an occasional jest at Drenla's expense. Begley is in the kitchen cooking. Gaylord has the kitchen door propped open with a chair so he can keep an eye on the halfling. Everyone is still tense but resigned to the fact the guards are gone and the storm is staying. As the night wears on, Tonazk eats, then retires upstairs. The orc chief, with his private bodyguards, appears to have few worries about what is happening at the fort.
>
> As the other patrons retire for the night, they pass Ax standing guard before the chief's door. The door to the adjoining room is open, and Kazickerk is asleep on a straw pallet within. As the long night passes, the two guards take the boring, silent watch in turns.

If the PC is in his room or in the main hall, read the following aloud. If the PC is elsewhere, paraphrase the boxed text, using one of the NPCs who is upstairs as a witness to these events.

> There is the sound of a snow slide, but it lasts far too long and is followed by the familiar sound of smashing wood and glass. Ax gives a great shout. The bodyguard is standing in the hallway, blaspheming the way only an orc can.
>
> As the other guests open their doors, weapons in hand, they see a strange creature there in the hallway. The thing is dark mottled gray in the flickering torchlight, with a fearsome set of claws, a large head and mouth, and a long tail. It is arched up over the fallen, headless body of Kazickerk like a python about to strike. Ax leans against the wall. His sword arm looks nearly severed, but his string of invectives has not slowed.

Chief Tonazk is one of the first to open his door, but even he is not fast enough to attack the creature. The monster immediately drops and wriggles in a rush, away from its fallen prey and out of the open walkway door in the southern hall. Tonazk gives chase, but the thing is gone into the blowing snow before he even comes close.

The slaad used its climb-walls ability to scale the chimney on the northern side of the main house. It then wriggled across the roof, chose a room at random, swung over the eaves, ripped the shutters off, and crashed in through the window. Kazickerk never had a chance. He was able to make it into the hallway, but the slaad was on him before he could even draw his weapon. It took the orc's head off in a single bite, then turned to attack the shouting Ax.

Ax made a wild swing at the creature but missed, and the slaad bit his sword arm, leaving the orc unable to strike or defend himself. Luckily, doors started opening and the creature immediately abandoned the fight.

If Ax receives immediate treatment for his arm (including a *cure light wounds* spell from Begley), he does not bleed to death. However, if he survives, his Strength is reduced to 5 and he has lost 10 hp. While he is able to wield a weapon with his shield arm, he does so with a −4 penalty to attack and damage rolls due to lack of Strength, pain, and the awkwardness of using the untrained arm.

Gaylord (or the PC, if he has tracking proficiency) can tell the creature did not use the walkway to the palisades, but has swung or jumped to the ground instead. The spot where the creature landed can be found easily, but figuring out where it went requires a tracking proficiency check. The slaad suffers 1d6 hp falling damage, but regenerates it within an equal number of rounds.

After swinging down from the second story, the slaad rushes along the southern palisade, past the gates, and enters the burned-out hulk of the barracks through the hole in the eastern wall.

Once inside the smoky barracks, the slaad begins a slow transformation from baby to young slaad. The creature begins molting thin pieces and hunks of skin (about 5 lbs. worth, see sidebar for

there is no love lost between them and the chief. Tonazk often treats them as mere servants and punishes them severely for small transgressions. If the chief is killed or mortally wounded, the bodyguards leave Jacob's Well by the fastest possible means and attempt to put as much distance as possible between themselves and their tribe.

9. Bar Storage. This area contains many kegs and casks. The northern wall holds a large cabinet filled with cheap earthenware mugs and beer steins. Jacob always keeps the door to this room locked in order to keep out customers and servants. A large cowbell attached to the inside of the door clanks loudly when the door is moved even slightly. If Jacob hears the cowbell, he comes running immediately to see who is poking around in his storeroom.

10. Kitchen. This room is surprisingly clean (for a room at Jacob's Well, that is) but hot and stuffy. A large work table dominates the center of the room, complete with chopping block and cleavers. Cooking and baking are done at the fireplace in the southwest corner.

The kitchen contains a large number of pots, pans, and cooking paraphernalia whose presence is something of a mystery, because the menu at Jacob's Well is notoriously limited. The bill of fare includes only meat and potato pie, meat and potato stew, or roast meat with boiled potatoes. The meat is whatever has been recently killed. It is usually venison but might be anything from black bear to wild dog. The cook, One-armed Ubbi, is an above-average chef and would be willing to expand the fare offered at the trading post if Jacob would supply the ingredients.

One-armed Ubbi: AL LN; AC 10; MV 12; 0-level human; hp 3; THAC0 20; #AT 1; Dmg by weapon type; ML 7; knife.

Ubbi was once a ship's cook and lost his left arm in a shipboard fire. He is a boring old man who regales anyone who will listen with long-winded tales of his seafaring exploits. Ubbi is not a coward, but he realizes his limitations in a fight. He does not willingly join in or seek any form of combat. If he must, he fights to the best of his ability and suffers no penalties on attack or damage rolls.

11. Scullery and Kitchen Storage. This room is always hot and humid. The scullery fireplace is in the northwest

corner and shares a common chimney with the kitchen fireplace. A great cauldron of boiling water steams over the fire constantly. The hot water from the cauldron is used to wash the laundry, pots, pans, and dirty dishes. The room contains a box of iron eating utensils and a large quantity of earthenware plates, cups, and saucers. There is also a cask of flour and several huge sacks of potatoes.

Upper Levels

12. Barracks Tower. This guard post is open only on the east and south sides. The trapdoor in the floor opens onto a ladder leading directly down into the barracks. The chimney of the southern fireplace forms part of the northwest corner of the post. The guards have loosened a large chimney stone so that it can be removed easily. During the bitter winter, the guard on duty can warm his cold hands and feet in the hot smoke rising up the chimney. There is usually only one guard posted here (see area 4 for statistics).

13. Stable Guard Towers. These towers are merely squat covered platforms built atop the stable roof. Ladders from the stable allow access to the towers through open holes in their floors. The two guard posts are the most uncomfortable in winter because they are open to the north wind. Guards stationed here must bundle up thoroughly or risk frostbite. For this reason, the guards often do not keep a very good watch. In a snowstorm, such as the one currently blowing, the guards huddle down below the palisade walls in an attempt to keep warm. Each post is manned by a single guard (see area 4 for statistics).

14. Gate Tower. The gate tower is little more than a covered walkway from which archers can fire. The eastern portion has been widened to accommodate a crude, home-made catapult. The catapult fires so wildly it is of little use when attempting to inflict damage, and is used primarily for show. Attackers have no way of knowing how accurate the weapon is, and its mere presence makes the fort's defenses look much stronger than they are.

However, the catapult is not completely useless. The guards have found it useful in drawing the enemy out into information on molted skin). Even though the slaad is perfectly motionless, it appears to be doing heavy labor. Its muscles bulge, relax, and reshape themselves beneath the creature's skin. Its color changes from murky gray to angry red. There is no set time limit for how long this transformation takes, though it seldom takes less than one hour or more than six. The DM is free to use a time period that best suits the adventure, or roll 1d6 for the number of hours the slaad takes to complete its change.

The slaad does not leave the barracks until the change is complete. If discovered, it fights to the death. However, while undergoing this minor metamorphosis, the creature is vulnerable. It is unable to move quickly, and all attack and damage rolls are made at −1. It automatically loses initiative and strikes last in every round until the transformation is complete.

From the moment the transformation begins, the baby slaad's thieflike abilities are reduced to those of a young slaad, but its regenerative properties and magic resistance are instantly raised to those of a young slaad. Use the young slaad statistics and hit points only after the transformation is complete.

Day Three

Morning:

It was a rough night for everyone. Chief Tonazk looks naked without his ever-present guards. Ax sits wrapped in a blanket, dozing in a chair. But life goes on, and food and drink are needed by the surviving guests.

The clank of the cowbell behind the bar announces Jacob has gone downstairs for more beer. Begley stands on a mop bucket behind the bar and serves. From the depths of the cellar comes a shouted orcish epithet, the sound of a crate of earthenware crashing to the floor, and a great deal of stamping about. Begley shouts, "It's downstairs! It's got Jacob!"

Even as Begley is shouting, everyone is moving toward the door behind the bar. In fact, everyone has reacted so quickly there is a logjam at the door and no one can get through.

Guntra gives a tremendous shove and a mighty pull and is suddenly free of the pack jammed in the doorway. Unfortunately, in his haste and effort to get through, he doesn't watch where he is going. He lands awkwardly on the stair landing and tumbles backward down the stairs, skinning both elbows, barking both shins, and releasing a continuous and fluent string of cuss words on his way down. He lands flat on his back, looking up into the astonished face of Jacob.

Jacob's mouth is wide open and his eyes are staring as he suddenly erupts into gales of laughter. Guntra's tumble down the stairs is the funniest thing he has ever seen. He is beside himself with laughter for a few minutes and is unable to answer questions. When Jacob finally gets the better of his mirth, he explains, "I just rousted a couple of rats. I don't want 'em getting into bed with me, now do I?" He then gets angry because so many people have invaded his private domain and begins yelling, "Out! Out! Everybody out! You've no business down here. And don't you be helping yourself to the liquor, Guntra."

For many hours afterward, Jacob remains alternately mirthful (looking at Guntra and chuckling to himself) and dour (glaring about the room and mumbling under his breath about people butting in where they're not needed). Guntra, on the other hand, remains extremely annoyed and testy for several hours after his unintentional pratfall in the cellar.

Evening:

The patrons have grown hungry and are tiring in the fruitless search for the thing stalking them. They have settled in the main house for dinner and a rest. Begley is busy peeling potatoes. Gaylord watches him from the doorway between the main hall and kitchen. The others are sitting at tables waiting for a break in the weather.

Hlutwulf goes upstairs for mattresses and blankets so he and Guntra can sleep near the fire. Drenla goes too, stating he wishes to retrieve his spell book. They are gone from view only a moment when a great shout erupts from the barbarian and Drenla is shouting, "It's here! It's here! We have it! We ha—"

Even before the shout of the barbarian has died, Chief Tonazk is up and running for the stairs. The death

of one of his bodyguards has hurt his pride, and he intends to make something or someone pay for it. He leaps up the stairs two and three at a time, waving a torch in each hand. Guntra follows close behind, his war hammer ready.

At the top of the stairs, Hlutwulf is leaning against the eastern wall, a great gash clawed across his throat. Guntra stops and helps bind the wound before his companion bleeds to death.

A great mass of sticky gray strands blocks the hallway. Entangled in the strands are Drenla and the creature. The thing looks something like a large bipedal frog, piebald red and pink in color. The huge mouth is full of impressive teeth, and its arms end in large, powerful-looking claws. The mage has managed to stick his dagger in the creature, but Drenla is obviously dead. The creature is pulling and heaving mightily at the sticky strands in an attempt to free itself. At each jerk and pull, Drenla's body jumps and dances like a marionette on tangled strings. The mage's head rolls to and fro at an odd angle, his neck broken.

Tonazk rounds the top of the stairs and, without slowing down, charges headlong into the spectacle crying, "Bahgtru! Bahgtru aked kerkazn!" The orc delivers a blow to the creature's head with a torch, which sets the sticky strands alight. The mass of threads disappears with a sudden sizzling roar and the awful stench of burning flesh. Tonazk takes another swing with the torch, but he is too late. Freed, the creature dodges under the torch, claws the orc chief as it passes, and is gone out the western walkway door into the blizzard.

How the PC reacts to this depends greatly on where he is in when it happens. If the PC is in the main hall with the others, no matter how fast he reacts to the noise upstairs, Tonazk and Guntra react slightly faster and are up the stairs ahead of him (read the boxed text normally). If the PC is upstairs when the slaad makes its appearance, the DM can ignore the boxed text and run an encounter between the slaad and the PC. The DM might also distract the PC from the area by having a snow slide knock a shutter loose. When the PC investigates the noise, Drenla and Hlutwulf start upstairs. In this case, the PC will be the first to arrive on the scene, but this will not stop Tonazk from running up the stairs and attacking with his torches. If the PC is somewhere else in the compound, it is up to the DM to determine what he is able to see, hear, or do about the situation.

If the PC is upstairs when the slaad jumps from the doorway, he may attempt to follow if he wishes. The NPCs do not follow immediately but remain behind to take care of the dead and wounded. The slaad has not followed the walkway to the palisade but has jumped to the ground, taking 2 hp damage. In all, the slaad has lost 12 hp: 2 hp from Drenla's dagger, 2 hp from being struck by the torch, 6 hp when the *web* burned, and 2 hp from jumping to the ground. Once on the ground, the creature runs to the burned-out barracks and enters the building through the hole in the eastern wall.

If the PC jumps, roll 1d6 for the amount of damage taken from the fall. There is no guarantee the PC can follow the slaad. Unless the PC can keep the slaad in sight, is a ranger, or has tracking proficiency, there is only a 10% chance the PC can follow the slaad's trail. The heavy snowfall buries the tracks almost as fast as the creature makes them.

If the PC is able to follow and enters the barracks through the hole in the eastern wall, he is immediately attacked by the slaad and suffers the loss of initiative for the first two rounds. If the PC uses the door in the western wall, initiative is rolled normally. If the PC uses the trapdoor in the barracks guard tower (area 12) to enter the building, he surprises the slaad on 1-5 on 1d10. In any case, if discovered in the barracks, the creature fights to the death.

If the PC does not follow the slaad, he may help with the wounded and fallen. Hlutwulf has taken a serious claw wound to the side of his neck. If Begley uses a *cure light wounds* spell, the barbarian is saved and does not bleed to death. However, Hlutwulf's Strength is reduced to 3 due to loss of blood. He is unable to fight or defend himself and even needs assistance to walk.

Once downstairs in the main hall, Hlutwulf regains enough strength to tell the story of the battle. The barbarian whispers in a dry voice, "As we turned the open. In winter, the guards put bits of rotten meat and moldy potatoes in the catapult and launch the rubbish in front of the gates. As hungry attackers fight each other for the food, they are cut down by archers on the walls. For night attacks, flaming oil flasks are launched from the catapult. The flasks seldom hit anything, but the oil fires light up targets for the archers.

Main Building, Second Floor

The second story of the main house contains the guest rooms. These rooms are all very much alike: bare cells containing two to five straw pallets. Most contain a window, but in cold weather the planklike shutters are closed tight, making it impossible to see outside. The floor has not been sealed or covered, so heat from the first floor rises through the cracks to warm the rooms. Noise, too, rises easily through the floor. At either end of the south hallway, doors open onto short walkways leading to the palisades. The walkways allow defenders to immediately man the walls or retreat to the main house if the walls are overrun.

15. Cook's Quarters. This room is used by Ubbi the cook (see area 10 for statistics). It contains a plank bed with a soft straw mattress and several blankets, and a table and chair brought up from the main hall below. Under the bed is a small locked iron-bound wooden box containing the cook's personal possessions.

The box holds a shell necklace, a necklace made of bits of coral, a shrunken head, and several small pouches of various herbs and spices used for cooking. The necklaces and shrunken head have sentimental value to Ubbi and no value to anyone else. The herbs and spices can be found growing wild around the trading post in the spring and summer.

16. Servant's Quarters. This room has a rough plank bed on which a straw pallet and two or three blankets have been placed. It also contains a low stool and a large trunk. In the trunk are nothing but several ragged blankets and a bundle of 20 candles. The room is used by the house servant:

Begley No-Shoes: AL LG; AC 10; MV 6; C1; hp 5; THAC0 20; #AT 1; Dmg by spell or weapon type; ML 11; sling.

Spell: *endure cold.*

Begley is a halfling cleric of the goddess Cyrrollalee (see DMGR4 *Monster Mythology*). Five months ago, he and 40 other pilgrims were bearing costly gifts to a shrine in the west when they were attacked by bandits. Most of the pilgrims were killed, and the survivors were scattered over the countryside. Begley survived the attack but became hopelessly lost. He wandered for many days before, by sheer luck, he stumbled on Jacob's Well. Jacob, out of necessity and not kindheartedness, took the halfling in as a servant and part-time guard.

Begley is a cheerful, stout-hearted little chap who clearly desires to return to his own people. He is paid only one silver piece a month and cannot afford to hire a guide to help him return home. So far, none of the traders or trappers stopping at Jacob's Well have been willing to help him.

17. Guardroom. The windows of this room stare out over the palisades to the south and east. Even though the guardroom is fairly warm and out of the weather, it is not a favorite post of the guards. As the room is part of the main house, Jacob is likely to show up at any time to make sure the guard is not asleep on duty. The room is completely unfurnished; Jacob wants his guards awake and watchful, not cozy and comfortable. There is only one guard on duty here (see area 4 for statistics).

18-24. Guest Rooms. Each room contains three or four parasite-infested straw mattresses. The rooms have no shelves, tables, chairs, chests, closets, or wardrobes. Someone (probably a previous owner) has driven a few pegs into the walls for hanging garments. Patrons of Jacob's Well must supply their own blankets or rent bedclothes from the servant (see area 16) at 1 cp per night. If the PC takes a room for the night, he is given one of these rooms.

25. Barbarians' Room. The straw mattress in the center of this room supports the unconscious form of Njal, the barbarian friend of Guntra and Hlutwulf (see area 8). His friends covered him in warm furs but could do little else for him. The barbarian moves and moans a little in his sleep but is otherwise completely incapacitated by the mysterious illness that so suddenly overcame him (see "Sequence of

into the hallway, the creature was there, suddenly coming out of the shadows. I raised my war hammer but was clawed in the neck before I could strike. The creature was about to claw me again when Drenla stuck it with his dagger, then sprang away to cast a spell. The thing was angered at being stuck and charged the mage just as he finished casting the spell." Hlutwulf insists the mage deliberately used himself as bait to lure the creature into the *web*.

Chief Tonazk has taken a claw wound across the thigh for 6 hp damage. He is reduced to half his normal movement rate because of the leg wound. After hearing the barbarian's story, the orc chieftain looks at the body of the dead mage and says, "Zedek nka lazd, kararka." If asked, Jacob translates Tonazk's words, both his battle cry upstairs and what he said over the dead mage. He explains that Bahgtru is the orcish god of strength, and the chief asked the deity for strength and vengeance. Also, the chief praised Drenla for his last act. The sentence is an orcish eulogy of praise for those who die bravely in battle. It means, "You died well, warrior."

Night: The fight upstairs has unnerved the fur trappers. They are extremely jumpy, starting at the sound of snow sliding off the roof and looking wildly around at the slightest noise. Tonazk, the barbarians, and the rest of the patrons are huddled together near the fire, comparing notes on what attacked them.

> The patrons are discussing the fight upstairs when Gaylord looks up and asks, "Where are the trappers?" Before the others can get excited, Shagath comes down the stairs and announces, "We're leaving. Terth and Xavick are loading our furs and making ready. It's madness to stay here." With that, he throws a bundle, containing the three suits of armor borrowed from Jacob, to the floor and asks Jacob for their bill.

The trapper cannot be persuaded to stay, though he states anyone is welcome to join them if they wish. The option is given serious consideration by everyone, even Jacob. However, before anyone can announce a decision there, the sound of a great commotion rolls in from the courtyard.

> As Shagath is counting coins into Jacob's outstretched hand, the courtyard echoes with the sounds of a man's shout followed by the scream of a wounded mule. Outside, the swirling snow impedes your vision, but you make out a downed man and pack mule on the far side of the well near the smithy. There is no sign of the other trapper or mules.
>
> As you approach, you see it is Terth lying dead in the snow, his head nearly severed. A quick inspection of the dead mule reveals two large, deep, jagged claw marks on either side of its neck. The other two mules are quickly located; they bolted back to the stable and stand there patiently. Everyone is repeatedly shouting, "Xavick!" There is no answer, only the whistling of the wind through the buildings of the compound.

As the fur trappers stood listening to the others discussing the horrors of the creature attacking the fort, they decided it was time to leave. They went upstairs, took off the borrowed armor, and gathered their possessions. While Shagath bundled up the armor and paid the bill, Xavick and Terth went to the courtyard to gather their furs and load the pack mules.

Unfortunately, the slaad was watching from the smithy. It charged as the two fur trappers loaded the mules. Terth was killed immediately, but Xavick managed to put the mule between himself and the slaad. He shouted for help, but the slaad was undeterred. It downed the mule with two vicious claw attacks to the animal's throat. The mule screamed, and the slaad went over its fallen body for Xavick. It killed Xavick instantly with one bite and carried the body back to the barracks.

The slaad will remain in the barracks, devouring the remains of Xavick, for 5d10+10 minutes before it emerges to hunt again. If discovered in the barracks, it fights to the death. For this encounter, initiative is rolled normally if the PC enters by either the doorway or the hole in the eastern wall. Because the slaad's attention is currently on its meal, it is surprised on a 1-6 on 1d10 if the PC enters by the trapdoor in the barracks guard tower (area 12).

Day Four

Morning: The young slaad is hiding in the smithy, shreds and pieces of flesh slowly sliding from its body. The creature is molting again, but the changes are not as dramatic as its change from baby to young slaad. The muscles again move and reshape themselves as the stubby tail is absorbed into the body, and the creature adopts its final adult coloration. The residue of this change generates only about 2 lbs. of the precious skin and flesh prized by alchemists. The DM may again choose the length of time for the change or roll 1d6 for the number of hours needed for the slaad to change from its young form to a full adult.

If discovered in the smithy, the slaad fights to the death. It suffers the same penalties as during its previous change. It rolls for attack and damage at −1, and it loses initiative automatically.

From the moment the final transformation begins, the slaad losses all its thieflike abilities. It does not gain adult hit points, the ability to *gate* in other slaadi, implant egg-pellets, or emit its *stunning* croak until the transformation to adult status is complete. However, it does gain the regenerative powers and magic resistance of an adult slaad at the beginning of the transformation.

If the slaad is able to complete this change, it immediately begins using its adult powers. As the snow falls and the wind blows, the slaad attempts to *gate* in fellow members of its race. Once other slaadi appear on the scene, Jacob's Well is in trouble. The newly mature slaad and any slaadi *gated* in attempt to kill or capture anyone remaining in Jacob's Well. Captured individuals are taken to the slaadi home plane of Limbo to serve as slaves, food, and hosts for slaadi eggs.

Concluding the Adventure

If the PC or NPCs kill the slaad, the danger is over and they may sit out the blizzard in the spartan comfort of Jacob's Well. Jacob will grudgingly allow the PC to stay at the trading post for one week free of charge, but the PC must pay for his own meals. If the PC defeats or helps defeat the slaad, use a base award of 500 XP. In addition, consult Tables 33 and 34 on page 48 of the *Dungeon Master's Guide* and award points as applicable.

At any time he desires, the PC may abandon the adventure and take his chances in the blizzard. Blizzard conditions around Jacob's Well last for five days before the weather breaks and normal travel is possible. The five-day period begins at midnight of the day the PC arrives at the trading post. If the PC leaves, continue to use the "Sequence of Events" to determine weather conditions, visibility, and weather-related damage until the PC finds shelter.

The PC is almost certain to get hopelessly lost in such a storm. The actual chance of getting lost is determined by consulting Tables 81 and 82 on page 128 of the *DMG*. Use the entries for "Thick forest" on Table 81 and "Fog or mist" on Table 82.

The DM can cut movement rates by 75% or quadruple movement point costs for travel through the storm. The rate of movement may also be determined by consulting pages 124 and 125 of the *DMG*.

The slaadi do not attempt to track and capture anyone who has left Jacob's Well during the storm. But there are many other dangerous creatures in the wilderness, and those surviving the blizzard may yet find themselves as an entree on something's menu. Such encounters can be handled using either the *Monstrous Compendium*'s Subarctic Forest encounter table or an encounter table of the DM's own design.

If Begley No-Shoes survives the adventure, give the PC an extra 200 XP for attempting to help Begley return home. The PC need not personally deliver Begley to his home, but merely get him to a city or village where he can hire on with a caravan or trading party headed in the direction he wishes to go. Jacob will be annoyed at his servants's departure and, in the future, the PC may not be welcome at the fort. Ω

Events," Day One, Evening, for details concerning Njal's illness).

Main Building, Lower Level

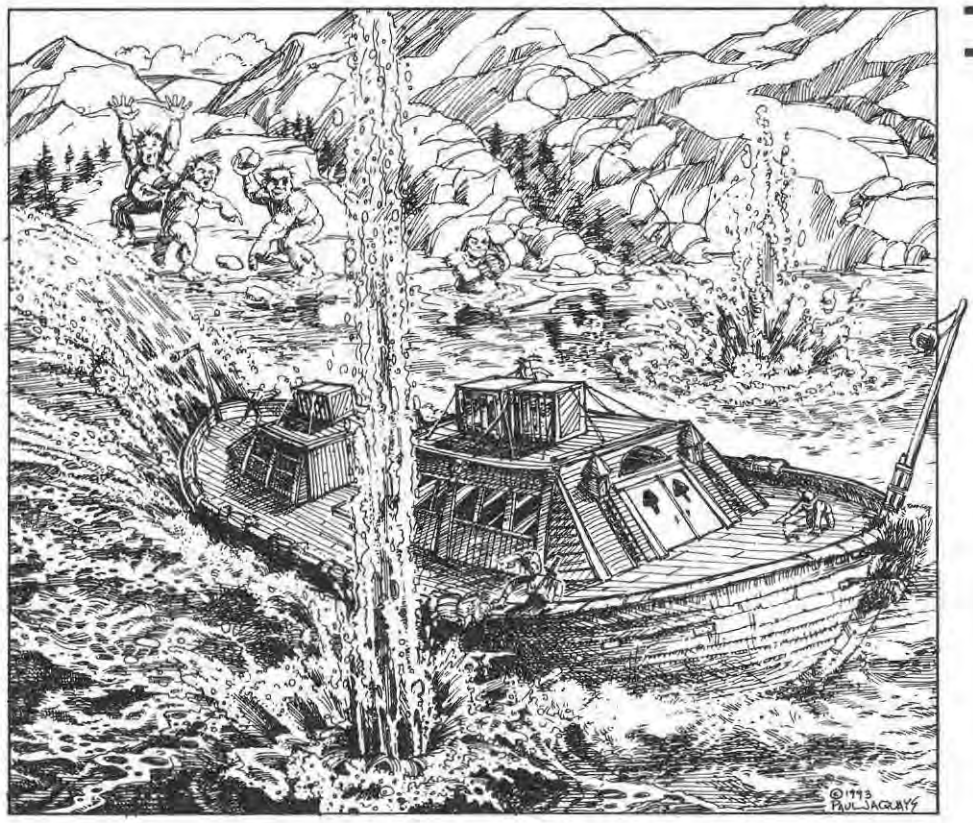
26. Cellar. Jacob sleeps in the cellar to keep an eye on the liquor and make sure no one comes near the treasury (area 27). The cellar is cluttered with extra chairs, tables, straw pallets, a couple of buckets, miscellaneous tools and hardware, and other items for running the trading post. Crates of cheap earthenware tankards, mugs, and plates line the walls, and several empty kegs and casks are piled alongside the stairs. The southeast corner is storage for barrels of the homemade beer and kegs of rum that Jacob serves his guests, and a large cask of "good stuff" he reserves for himself.

Jacob's bed, in the northeast corner, is a preposterously large, ornate, and canopied affair with a down-filled silk mattress. Jacob received the bed from a party of adventurers in payment for a week's stay. How they came by it remains a mystery, but they were tired of hauling it through the forest and were very glad when Jacob took it off their hands.

27. Jacob's Treasury. This room is a crudely excavated earthen cell. The door is always locked, and Jacob has the only key. The door is concealed behind barrels of homemade beer, and it is a tight squeeze for a man-sized creature to reach it. When unlocked, the door opens into a room containing a large locked strongbox and a small iron-bound wooden chest.

The lock on the strongbox is trapped with a poison needle (save vs. poison or be weak and incapacitated for 2-8 days, Strength reduced to 3). The strongbox contains Jacob's money and a few items of value taken from various guests now occupying the graveyard. It holds 2,200 gp in assorted coins (the majority being copper and silver pieces), assorted jewelry worth no more than 1,000 gp total, and 10 gems worth 100 gp each. The box also contains two spell books taken from dead wizards. These books are useless to Jacob but he recognizes their value. They each contain only four or five 1st- and 2nd-level spells (DM's discretion).

The wooden chest is locked but not trapped. It contains only Jacob's important papers, such as various contracts with shippers, adventuring companies, fur traders, etc. Ω



MOVING DAY

BY ROGER BAKER

Trouble on the docks and in the locks.

Artwork by Paul Jaquays

Roger writes: "An article entitled 'We're Too Busy For Ideas' in the March 29, 1993 issue of Newsweek *struck a chord in me. I realized that with school (USC's School of Cinema-Television) and exams, I had become too busy for ideas. I hope that when I graduate in December, things will slow down a bit (my wife doesn't believe this for a minute, though). I recommend the above article for anyone who's struggled with writer's block."*

This AD&D® adventure is intended for a party of 4-6 player characters of levels 3-5 (about 20 total levels). A well-balanced party, including several fighters and a wizard, is crucial to completing the mission successfully. Nonweapon proficiencies such as swimming or seamanship will also be useful.

Background

For decades, the seaport of Dobay has been a thriving economic power. Most of this prosperity is due to the extensive waterborne commerce that flows through Dobay from the inland cities and towns to ports all over the world. The unique system of canals, rivers, and other inland waterways located near Dobay provides easy transportation of goods from landlocked towns and cities to the coast. Control of these crucial trade and transportation routes has allowed Dobay to become a center of industry, culture, and economic and political power.

As Dobay grew from a small coastal fishing town to the commercial metropolis that it is today, skilled boatmen were needed to handle the flatboats and barges that transported cargo from the interior to the coast. Over the years, the boatmen's control of this commerce strengthened, and they eventually formed the Dykmen's Guild to represent their interests. Soon, nearly all goods that traveled on the inland waterways were transported by the guild.

As the years passed and the countryside surrounding Dobay was tamed, overland travel between the inland cities and towns became faster and easier. Newly built roads and increased patrols meant fewer losses due to bandits and natural disasters. In addition, wagons and overland transportation were often able to reach areas that barges could not, since these craft were restricted to waterways where draft animals on the riverbank could be used

to pull them upstream. As overland trade grew, the Dykmen's Guild began to lose its control over commerce and the Wagoneers' Guild began to rise in prominence.

Many members of the Dykmen's Guild did not recognize this trend and dismissed it as the idle gossip of doomsayers, but others began to investigate options to retain their livelihood and wrest control of overland commerce back from the Wagoneers. The problem seem to be solved when Timor Shackney, a retired wizard and fellow dykman, hit upon the idea of harnessing the power of conjured water elementals to power the dykmen's craft.

With the hesitant help of the guild, Shackney built a prototype boat that he called *Elements of Magic.* Using an old dilapidated barge, Shackney added a special double hull, within which he imprisoned a minor water elemental. With an intake at the bow to draw water in and an exhaust chute at the stern where the water was pushed out in a concentrated jet, the speed and maneuverability of the craft was greatly improved. Many of the citizens of Dobay nicknamed Shackney's prototype *Shackney's Folly,* until they saw how it performed. They were dumbfounded.

Shackney soon built another prototype, *Elements of Magic II,* from the keel up, utilizing a larger and more powerful elemental. The stronger elemental increased the speed and agility of the craft even further. By carefully working enchantments of binding into the hulls of his prototypes, Shackney discovered he could make the conjuration nearly permanent.

The guild members hailed Shackney as their savior and quickly elected him guildmaster, much to the dismay of the previous officeholder. Soon after, several of the wealthier members commissioned their own elemental-powered boats. Although the first boats were terribly expensive, the cost quickly dropped as Shackney's new shipbuilding company, Elemental Waterworks, refined the process. Additionally, a groundbreaking alliance between the Wizards' Guild and the Dykmen's Guild reduced the cost of building these craft even further. Still, to commission or buy a barge, one had to be wealthy or have a very good line of credit with the Mariner's Bank.

These improvements to their craft enabled the dykmen to make the trip between Dobay and other cities much faster than ever before and with less risk, effectively eliminating any competition from the Wagoneers' Guild. In addition, the new propulsion system allowed the barges to traverse swift running rivers and even underground channels. Numerous channels that had previously been impassible because of the speed of the current or the lack of side paths for draft animals became navigable. In particular, the Zvern Passage, which linked Lake Orchi with Lake Jotun by way of an underground river, was opened to commerce, making travel between the frontier city of Zvern and the coastal city Dobay easier than ever before.

Now the riches of the frontier and the wealth to be found beneath the Blanca Mountains became available to anyone brave enough to attempt the trip. The system has been so successful over the past few decades that Elemental Waterworks Company has begun researching a seagoing model. The seagoing prototype has been much more problematical, however.

Currently the Dykmen's Guild is composed of 57 families, each owning and operating one or more barges or flatboats. Most boats in the guild are operated by a multigenerational families, whose members all live and work on their boat.

The vessels vary in size and carry all kinds of cargo. Some of the smaller boats are used for intra-city transport, utilizing minor elementals within their double hulls and attaining a top speed of approximately 3 MPH. Larger craft are designed for long trips on swift rivers and use more powerful elementals. These vessels can reach speeds of 5 MPH on calm water. A typical cargo might include grain, stone, cloth, herbs, flowers, semirefined metals, food, papyrus, furs, or weapons, in addition to many other goods and materials.

Like most occupations, however, riverboating is not always a safe and secure business. It's a rare year when several guild members or one or two boats are not removed from the membership lists. However, there are always more added when couples marry and receive boats as part of their dowry, when a particularly well-financed entrepreneur joins the guild, or when a family expands its operations by building or purchasing another craft.

For the Player Characters

Read or paraphrase the following to the players:

> Although spring is here and the city of Dobay is bustling around you, your expectations for employment seem rather dim. Dobay has treated you well over the past few weeks, but now money is running short and it's time to move on.
>
> Suddenly, the sing-song voice of the town crier spreading the word of a job for a group of fearless and hardy individuals reaches your ears. His message is simple:
>
> "Wanted: Those brave and strong enough to accompany the flatboat *Mirimar* through the Zvern Passageway. Requirements are threefold: 1. Must be able to formulate and maintain security aboard a moving barge. 2. Must be able to handle emergencies of all shapes, sizes and kinds. 3. All applicants must be able to swim. Bandits and mercenaries need not apply. See the *Mirimar*, pier #3, for details!"
>
> Sounds like a wonderful opportunity! When asked, the crier can only reiterate that applicants must seek further information at pier #3.
>
> Upon arrival, you are met by Flora Brennan, who speaks with you on the pier. Contrary to the hospitality shown by the rest of the city, she does not offer you chairs or the customary cup of tea, and looks extremely wary of you and your companions.
>
> When she explains her dilemma, however, you quickly understand why she and her crew appear so rude. "My husband Tal and I've been hired to take some household goods and research specimens to Zvern, which is about 140 miles away on the shores of Lake Jotun. We'll be going by way the Zvern Passage, so part of the trip will be underground. In itself, this task is not too difficult. After all, this is our business, and we do it well.
>
> "There are several things, however, that have caused us to worry about this particular trip. First, there has been an attempt to steal various items belonging to our client, especially the cockatrice specimens he is so proud of. And last night someone tried to set our boat on fire with a couple of pitch pots. Our client, Duncan Dugglesby, was a well-known

wizard in these parts before he moved to Zvern, and we fear that some of his enemies might be trying to get in one last shot at him.

"In addition, the Zvern Passage has recently become unsafe. A message just arrived at guild headquarters about an attack on the last boat that passed through. The boat arrived in Yante Town with the crew half dead and their craft severely damaged by fire. They're still convalescing there. The passageway used to be very secure, but something is going on under those hills and it's causing trouble. If we're going to make this trip, we need some resourceful guards to ward off any unexpected difficulties. Think you're up to it?"

Flora tells you that the journey will take a minimum of four and half days, during which you will need to keep watch on Dugglesby's specimens and protect the *Mirimar* from whatever danger come up on the way to Zvern. The exact duration of the trip will depend on the speed the *Mirimar* travels and whether night travel is attempted. Flora offers each of you 50 gp to complete the trip.

Flora also explains that the *Mirimar* must make other stops along the way at the towns of Merrow's Bane, Velvet, Yante Town, and at Bad Badger's Inn beneath the Blanca Mountains, in order to pick up or drop off various items. She expects that these stops should be very brief and should not affect the schedule significantly.

The fee that Flora offers is negotiable but should not rise above 60 gp per person. If the party decides to take the job, Flora and Tal will require some kind of security to assure themselves that the PCs are not in league with the criminal elements responsible for recent events. They will be satisfied by either a good reference from the Dykmen's Guild, two references from respectable citizens of Dobay or Zvern, a reference from Dobay's Wizard's Guild, the solemn oath of a paladin, or a 500-gp bond placed in trust with the Dykmen's Guild (a receipt will assure a full refund obtainable at guild offices in either Dobay or Zvern). Only with this assurance of the nature of the PCs' character will they invite the party aboard, offer a cup of tea, and make introductions.

The Crew

Flora explains that the *Mirimar* is operated by her family and one hired hand. The family consists of Flora, her husband, and their three children: Johann, age 17, Jeran, 14, and Nor, 12. Coffee, a halfling who hired on to learn the business, completes the crew. So far, they have been able to take care of themselves, even when times have gotten rough, but things have gotten out of hand lately.

The crewmembers all know their jobs and do them well. Flora makes all deals for cargo and extra crew, pays all fees, and keeps the books. She leaves the duties of loading and unloading, navigating and security to Tal, Johann, and Coffee. Flora is also in charge of maintaining the boat, which includes repairs and refitting when necessary. Jeran and Nor often help Flora with simple maintenance duties like painting or cleaning in addition to running errands for Tal, Johann, and Coffee. Coffee helps Flora with important repairs to the *Mirimar* when he is not assisting Tal or Johann.

The family is a little slow to warm to strangers, especially heavily armed men and women such as the PCs, but they are by no means cold and are soon trading jokes and stories with those of pleasant demeanor.

Flora Brennan: AL LG; AC 10; MV 12; M2; hp 6; THAC0 20; #AT 1; Dmg by spell or weapon type; S 7, D 12, C 12, I 14, W 9, Ch 13; ML 14; knife, scroll of *protection* (water elementals). Spells: *cantrip, protection from evil.*

Flora is reserved but friendly to just about anyone. She is quick to anger but quick to forgive as well. She is proficient with knives. Her spell book, hidden in area A aboard the *Mirimar*, contains 1-6 first-level spells in addition to the two noted above.

Tal Brennan: AL LG; AC 8; MV 12; 0-level human; hp 5; THAC0 20; #AT 1; Dmg by weapon type; S 13, D 10, C 12, I 12, W 12, Ch 13, ML 14; scimitar, light crossbow, spear, leather armor.

Tal is friendly but remains guarded with the party until he gets to know them well. He is very protective of his wife and children.

Johann Brennan: AL LG; AC 10; MV 12; 0-level human; hp 4; THAC0 20; #AT 1; Dmg by weapon type; S 14, D 8, C 13, I 10, W 7, Ch 12; ML 14; scimitar, light crossbow.

Johann is confident to the point of foolhardiness, yet he knows his business and takes great care in it. He is loud and easily excitable.

Jeran and **Nor Brennan:** AL LG; AC 10; MV 6; 0-level humans; hp 3, 2; THAC0 20; #AT 1; Dmg by weapon type; ML 7; sling, 10 slingstones.

Both Jeran and Nor are initially shy around visitors but soon warm to any friendly advances. Both can use a sling, though neither Tal nor Flora will allow them to engage in any combat.

Coffee (halfling): AL LN; AC 7; MV 6; F3; hp 20; THAC0 18; #AT 1; Dmg by weapon type; S 15, D 15, C 13, I 12, W 9, Ch 12; ML 14; leather, *short sword +1, necklace of adaptation.*

Coffee, whose full name is Barnicus Jonathon Friendlyman Underhill, is a Tallfellow halfling who wants to own his own boat some day. A retired adventurer, he is working for Tal to learn the trade and gain contacts in the guild. He is very loyal to Flora and Tal, though not foolhardy. He is good with his hands, and his knowledge of languages has been a great help to the Brennans. He can speak Common, halfling, and dwarf. In addition to the short sword, Coffee is proficient with light crossbows, clubs, and daggers. Coffee's nickname is derived from his incredible fondness for the unusual drink, which is served cold with goat's milk in this part of the world.

Once introductions are out of the way and negotiations for pay have been settled, Flora describes the two incidents that frightened her and caused her to seek outside help. The first happened early yesterday afternoon, when Tal noticed two gentlemen loitering around some of the cargo that was to be loaded onto the *Mirimar*. When he confronted them, the larger one put him in a bear hug while the smaller man pulled out a sack and jumped on board. He headed toward the cockatrice specimens lashed on top of the cabins but quickly retreated when Johann and Coffee emerged from the hold and snatched up belaying pins. Faced with such stern opposition, both intruders soon fled. The city guard arrived too late to do anything more than make a report. The Brennans thought little of the incident at the time, however, considering it just a random occurrence.

The second incident changed their minds, however. Early yesterday evening, the smaller of the two men returned carrying a large bucket and a

torch. Coffee noticed him and warned him to stay away. Before anyone could do anything, the man lit the contents of the bucket and slung the burning pail onto the *Mirimar*. The burning oil landed dangerously close to the cockatrice specimens. Luckily, the fire was quickly extinguished with several nearby buckets of sand. The creatures remained unharmed, although they were excited and restless throughout the night.

Flora decided that the risks were becoming too great for her family to handle alone, so she posted an all-night guard and sought help at first light.

Flora wants to leave as soon as possible but is waiting for one other crate to arrive from a bowyer before casting off. She will allow the party to make some investigations in town while she waits for the final shipment of cargo (which will arrive in three hours), but only if several PCs remain behind to guard the boat.

For the DUNGEON MASTER™

The precursors to these two events occurred several months ago. Duncan Dugglesby is well known in Dobay as a leading researcher of the nature of magical beasts. A month ago, he decided to move his base of operations and his home to Zvern, where the wizards' College of Jaarth is located.

Dugglesby's current research project concerns the petrification ability of the cockatrice. If all goes well, he hopes to present a paper on this topic to the Prestidigitator's Convention to be held in two months in Zvern. Advance publicity of this anticipated event has greatly increased interest in the ordinarily quiet convention, and so far the lure of Dugglesby's paper has been the primary draw. A successful presentation will definitely increase Dugglesby's standing among his peers, but a failure will be a serious professional setback and leave many disappointed and annoyed conventioneers.

Until recently, Dugglesby's research had been hindered by the lack of viable specimens. Just a week ago, however, Dugglesby was able to obtain five cockatrices in excellent health. This acquisition came too late to travel with the main shipment of his household goods, so Dugglesby arranged for the Brennans to take the beasts. He anticipated that the journey would be quiet, and he would be able to continue his research in time to make his presentation.

However, a rival wizard, Malvent Horatio the Proud, wants desperately to discredit and embarrass Dugglesby, against whom he bears much ill will. Dugglesby was the key witness responsible for convicting Malvent of several charges of "improper conjuring within a populated area" and "conspiring with revolutionaries for the purpose of public unrest." The Dobay city council voted to strip Malvent of all his magical belongings and banish him from the city. To make matters worse, Malvent challenged Dugglesby to a public magical duel to regain his honor but was forced to surrender when he was badly beaten. Reduced to professional penury, Malvent blames Dugglesby for almost all his troubles and wants revenge.

Since his defeat and subsequent exile, Malvent has been plotting his comeback. In workshop hidden in the hills near Velvet, he has managed to begin rebuilding his power, slowly collecting magical items and arcane knowledge to replace that which was confiscated by the city council and destroyed by Dugglesby during the duel. By calling in favors, selling all his remaining assets, and even blackmailing a few colleagues and ex-students, Malvent has managed to gain the spells and magical items he currently carries. But even though he has not regained all his power, Malvent is still a powerful opponent.

Malvent's Strategy

Malvent's plan is to steal the objects of Dugglesby's research, thus setting his rival's timetable back by weeks, if not months. Dugglesby's presentation will surely be ruined. In addition, Malvent himself needs the feathers of the cockatrices for several magical items he is constructing. Now that the area around Dobay has become more civilized, Malvent has had as much trouble procuring cockatrices as Dugglesby. If he can steal the cockatrices from the Brennans, he can kill two birds with one stone, so to speak.

Malvent's plan is simple. He will try increasingly forceful means to steal the birds away from the party, beginning here in Dobay. If one attempt fails, Malvent will move on to the next ambush site, using spells such as *polymorph self* or *teleport*. He knows the general route that most riverboats take to Zvern, and he plans to make several attempts before the trip is over. He will harass the party until they safely deliver their cargo at Zvern or he is incapacitated.

Malvent's purpose is not to kill, but to steal the cockatrices. His accomplices are unlikely to have the same restraint, however. Malvent will not willingly die in this effort, preferring to wait for another opportunity if things get sticky. He will remember those who stopped him, however, and may be back to harass them at a later date and location, when they least expect it.

If Malvent manages to succeed at any point along the way, he will not carry out any of the subsequent attempts detailed below. He will quickly travel to his hidden workshop, where he will use the creatures to complete his experiments and the construction of his magical items and gloat over his victory.

The first incident that Flora Brennan described was a simple attempt to steal the birds, which obviously failed. The second was an ill-conceived attempt to get the Brennans to remove the creatures from the boat, thus making them easier to steal. The Brennans extinguished the fire too quickly for this diversion to work, however, and this attempt was foiled too.

Since he has been banished from Dobay, Malvent has directed these attempts from outside the city. He has not given up, however, and has several other tricks up his sleeve.

Malvent Horatio the Proud: AL LE; AC 5; MV 12; M9; hp 25; THAC0 18; #AT 1; Dmg by spell or weapon type; S 5, D 14, C 9, I 15, W 13, Ch 10; ML 17; XP 3,000.

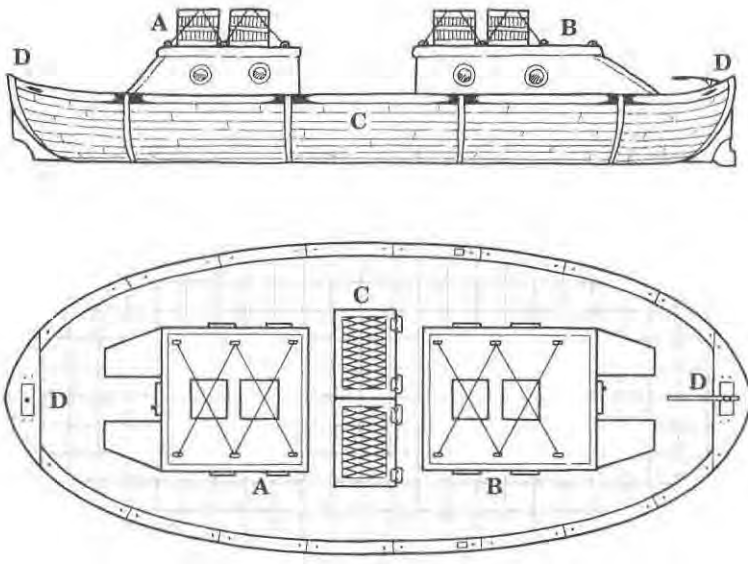
Spells: *dancing lights, magic missile* (×2), *wall of fog; irritation, scare, stinking cloud; fly, wraithform; fumble, polymorph self*; teleport**.

Malvent has memorized the above spells at the beginning of the adventure. As the adventure progresses, he replaces the spells marked with asterisks, used to follow the *Mirimar*, with *fear* and *animate dead*. In addition, his spell books hold: *armor, spider climb, unseen servant, continual light, invisibility 10' radius, suggestion, dimension door, stoneskin, wall of ice, stone shape,* and *wall of stone*. He routinely has *armor* and *stoneskin* in effect. Malvent carries a *wand of size alteration* and wears a *ring of telekinesis* and *boots of striding and springing*.

Unfortunately for Malvent, he has been unable to rebuild his spell books

The *Mirimar*

1 square = 4′



and magical possessions to their previous power, but he feels confident that his skills will be up to the task of stealing the cockatrices.

Malvent gained his nickname through his fine manner of dress and high-brow attitude, easily mistaken as arrogance. He has very little time for those of lower station and does not work well with the common folk (thus his average Charisma score). If it suits his purpose to *charm* a peasant into giving him dinner and a bed for the night, he'll do it without a moment's hesitation. He is neither foolhardy nor exceptionally courageous and will likely give the greater risks to an underling.

The *Mirimar*

The Norsemen ancestors of the current residents of Dobay believed that each of their ships was a living, breathing beast. In several ways they were right. Boats can take only so much damage before they die or sink. They can be healed, or repaired, but this is not always an easy process. They must be cared for and protected much like any other domesticated animal or they will balk. With the dykmen's additions of the water elemental, the similarity goes even further.

The *Mirimar* is approximately 100′ long, 40′ wide, and has a draft of 1′-2′ feet while empty. Depending on the weight of the load, the boat may have a draft as deep as 3′, although cargoes of this weight are very rare. This type of barge is capable of a top speed of 4 MPH.

The *Mirimar* can operate up to 20 hours per day (80 miles at full speed on calm water) before its water elemental (named Squirt by the crew) requires a minimum of four hours rest. If the elemental is forced to work for longer than this period, it will balk at commands 25% of the time and reduce the speed of the craft by 50%. After 30 hours straight running, the elemental will refuse to carry out 75% of the crews' commands, is unable to move the ship faster than 25% of normal speed, and will require 10 hours' rest before resuming normal speed. After 40 hours, Squirt will refuse to accept any commands and will require 24 hours' rest before resuming its work.

The special enchantments that confine Squirt within the hull of the *Mirimar* are maintained by specially trained guild wizards called "binders." Maintenance is free for all guild members and must be completed every four months. For every month thereafter without renewed enchantments, there is a cumulative 10% chance that the imprisoned water elemental can escape. Binding renewal was completed on the *Mirimar* just two months ago. Flora does not expect to require it again for another two.

Structurally, the *Mirimar*'s body is constructed to resist damage. For every 5 hp damage inflicted on the *Mirimar*, the boat sustains one structural point (StP) of damage. Any structural damage may cause a serious leak to develop in the *Mirimar*'s hull, and also increases Squirt's chances of escape. For every StP of damage that the *Mirimar* receives, there is a 1% chance the boat will spring a leak and begin sinking. Thus, if the boat is hit for 45 hp damage, the *Mirimar* takes 9 StP damage and has a 9% probability of sinking. Each time the *Mirimar* takes damage, the chance of sinking must be rechecked. The *Mirimar* may be seaworthy one round and sinking fast the next!

Fire, edged weapons, impact and fire-related magic, and weapons such as the *ring of the ram* or ballistae do normal damage. Electrical and cold attacks do not damage the ship, but inflict 1 hp damage per die to Squirt. Spells like *mending* repair 1 StP damage per level of the caster. Destructive spells such as *warp wood* or *disintegrate* cause 1 StP damage per level of the caster. All damage to the ship is cumulative.

When a roll indicates that the ship has sprung a leak, the *Mirimar* sinks at a rate per round equal to the number of StP damage taken. When the *Mirimar*'s cumulative leaks add up to 100 leakage points, it sinks completely. Thus, if the *Mirimar* takes 9 StP damage and springs a leak (roll 01-09 on d%), it begins sinking at a rate of 9 leakage points per round and will sink completely in 12 rounds. This fate can be forestalled by the two pumps located fore and aft (see area D). Additional damage to the *Mirimar* will make the boat sink faster. For example, if the *Mirimar* accumulates nine leakage points one round, then takes 2 StP additional damage, it will accumulate 11 leakage points in the following round.

Crewmembers can man one of the pumps in area D and neutralize leaks resulting from damage of 15 StP or less.

If both pumps are manned, leaks from 30 StP or less can be neutralized. If the pumping stops, however, the sinking process begins again. All leaks remain until repairs can be made at a major town such as Yante, Zvern, or Dobay.

Only if the boat develops a serious leak will the enchantments on Squirt be weakened to the point that the elemental can escape. Squirt's chance to escape is equal to the number of StP damage the *Mirimar* has received. For examples, if the *Mirimar* has taken 9 StP damage and fails its leakage roll, Squirt has a 9% chance of escaping. Additional rolls should be made each time the *Mirimar* takes damage.

Squirt (water elemental): INT low; AL N; AC 2; MV 6, swim 18; HD 8; hp 50; THAC0 12; #AT 1; Dmg 5-30; SA *slow* boat; SD +2 or better weapon to hit; SZ L; ML 15; MC1.

Squirt is rather annoyed with its imprisonment. If ever freed, it will take 2-5 rounds to wreak revenge on whoever is available before fleeing into the nearest body of water.

Tal has two poles enchanted with *continual light* spells placed at the bow and stern to provide light for night or underground travel. He keeps two extra light poles in area B, in case one of the first two is lost. Several sand and water buckets are positioned at strategic areas of the boat to put out fires.

A. Living Area. This is the family sleeping quarters, but if it is particularly pleasant outside, the Brennans sleep on deck. Six people can sleep here: two in beds on the port and starboard sides of the cabin, and two on the floor. There is space for one more bedroll.

This cabin contains numerous cupboards and drawers containing clothing, blankets, linens, personal and household items, flatware, business records, pens and paper, and the manual detailing guild rules and regulations.

A secret compartment under one of the beds holds 5 pp, 245 gp, 233 sp, and 34 cp. A small stove provides heat and a surface on which to cook hot meals. There is 8′ of headroom in the cabin.

The flat roof of the cabin is often used as cargo space for bulky or odd-sized goods. The roof is currently home to Alexander and Xavier, two young male cockatrices confined within uniquely constructed, double-layered wooden cages. Each outside cage measures 6′ × 6′ × 6′, but a second cage rigged inside the first is only 4′ × 4′ × 4′, thus creating a 1′ buffer all around the interior cage. This prevents the monsters from reaching out of their cages and petrifying innocent passersby. Each cage can take 25 hp damage before breaking open and releasing its occupant. Both the inner and the outer cages are secured by hook-and-eye latches.

Flora and Tal have been thoroughly briefed by Dugglesby about the unique abilities of the cockatrice. They stay well away from the beasts and do not let Jeran or Nor anywhere near the cages.

Alexander and **Xavier** (cockatrices): INT animal; AL N; AC 6; MV 6, fly 18 (C); HD 2; hp 15, 13; THAC0 19; #AT 1; Dmg 1-3; SA petrification; SZ S; ML 11; XP 650; MC1.

Neither Alexander nor Xavier has been domesticated. If released, they attack immediately.

B. Equipment Storage. All the equipment needed to run the *Mirimar* is stored in this cabin. Paint, tools, rope, tar, canvas, grease, extra cleats and anchors, nails, wood, and other supplies fill this room. As in area A, there is about 8′ of headroom. Coffee usually sleeps here. There is sleeping space for three more people among the equipment.

As with area A, there is space on the roof for tying down extra cargo. The roof is currently filled with two cages similar to those above area A. One cage holds Dugglesby's female cockatrice, Loleth, the other holds two cockatrice chicks, barely six months old. Although they can fend for themselves, the chicks have yet to be taught to fly. If released, they will wander off after 2-12 rounds.

Loleth (cockatrice): HD 3; hp 19; THAC0 17; XP 675; other statistics as given for Alexander and Xavier.

Cockatrice chicks (2): AC 8; MV 6 (cannot fly); HD 1; hp 7, 6; THAC0 20; #AT 1; Dmg 1; SA petrification (save at +4 due to youth); ML 9; XP 175; other statistics as for Alexander and Xavier.

C. Cargo Hold. 8′ × 12′ doors open to reveal the cargo hold of the *Mirimar*. Currently, it is partially filled with Dugglesby's cargo plus a large shipment of woolen fabric destined for Zvern, 20 crates of soap to be unloaded at Velvet, 10 bales of papyrus destined for paper shops in Zvern, and a crate of 400 crossbow bolts and 10 barrels of dwarven ale ordered by the proprietor of Bad Badger's. Three large ceramic jars holds the cockatrices' food mix of dead bugs, dried beetles, dead mice, and beef jerky. There is enough of the unique mix to feed all five cockatrices for six days.

Fourteen large wooden chests are clearly marked with Dugglesby's name, symbol, and address in Zvern. Large lettering, written in Common, reads: "DO NOT OPEN," "FRAGILE!!," and "THIS SIDE UP" on every box. If the first of these directives is disobeyed, the contents are revealed:

Chest 1: Linen and household goods like soap, pots and pans. Value: 23 gp.

Chest 2: China, carefully packed in cloth to avoid breakage. Value: 200 gp.

Chests 3 and 4: Spell components in glass jars, labeled and also carefully packed in cloth. Careful inventory of the contents will reveal a selection of nearly 100 spell components. Most are common items like spiderweb and autumn leaves, but others are more rare. Value: 500 gp.

Chest 5: Several stuffed beasts including a jackal, a wolverine, and a tasloi. An *eversmoking bottle* is tucked in between two of the specimens. This box was loaded onto the *Mirimar* carelessly and may fall because of any sudden maneuver during the trip (30% chance for each jarring motion). Any fall will knock the cork out of the bottle, sending smoke pouring into the hold. Value: Beasts (to a collector), 5 gp, 20 gp, and 75 gp respectively; Bottle: 400 gp.

Chests 6 and 7: Books on subjects ranging from herbal lore to statistics. A scrap of paper in one of the books is a treasure map to a ruin deep in the Blanca Mountains. Value: Books, 250 gp per box; Map, 100 gp.

Chest 8: Laboratory glassware of all kinds. Value: 300 gp.

Chest 9: Dirt. This is actually earth consecrated to a lawful-evil deity and used for experiments. This material will detect as weakly evil. Value: 40 gp.

Chest 10: Horseshoes, lead soldiers, and souvenir metal paperweights from all over the world. Total value: 16 gp.

Chest 11: Raw materials for the creations of wands, and a sack containing 300 gp. A separate velvet-lined box lined contains a *wand of wonder.* The wand looks and functions like a pencil. However, when the command words "Number 2, Soft" are spoken, the wand will discharge. The words are written on the side of the wand. Value: 10,000 gp.

Chest 12: Robes of all different colors and fashions. A majority are in line with what the well-dressed wizard is

wearing in Dobay today. Some robes are for very cold weather, other items are for hot weather and would be useless in Dobay, where the climate is rather temperate. Value: 12 robes, 1-20 gp each.

Chest 13: Research papers on cockatrices. Studying all these materials will impart a thorough knowledge of the behavior, life cycle, growth cycle, and dietary requirements of the cockatrice. Some useful information can also be learned about chickens, lizards, basilisks, medusae (because of their ability to turn other creatures to stone), and rust monsters (because of their touch attack).

Chest 14: Two stuffed cockatrices, one female and one male. Both are full-grown specimens and beautifully preserved. Neither retains the petrification attack.

Chests 3, 6, and 12 have *alarm* spells cast on them (as cast by a 7th-level wizard). The alarms are loud enough to be heard on the entire boat.

If anyone wishes to bunk here, there is plenty of room, although it is a little stuffy. The cargo doors can be locked and will take 50 hp damage before shattering. Only Tal, Flora, and Johann have keys to the hold. There is 7′ clearance between the floor of the hold and the upper deck.

A shallow sub-level of the hold acts as the bilge and is partially filled with slimy water and small insects. There is 1′ of clearance between the floor of the hold and the hull. The draw pipes from the pumps in area D are placed here.

D. Stern/Bow. The stern and the bow on the *Mirimar* are interchangeable. The tiller can be removed and reattached at the bow if necessary. This alteration alerts Squirt to change the direction of flow through the hull, reversing the *Mirimar*'s direction of travel. The switch is relatively simple and any of the adult crew members can complete it in under five rounds. Either Tal, Johann, or Coffee must be at the tiller whenever the boat is in motion.

A small control panel with four levers (green, red, blue, and pink) gives Squirt directions. Green signals Squirt to go faster, red to go slower, and blue to stop. The further down the green and the red levers are pulled, the faster or slower Squirt will go. Squirt can manage a maximum movement rate (MV) of 12 per round, or 4 MPH. The pink lever functions like a crop on a riding horse, to encourage greater effort. Squirt sometimes gets rather recalcitrant and must be encouraged by the little electric shock that the lever generates.

Crude pumps at the bow and stern can remove water from the bilge. Each can remove 15 leakage points from the *Mirimar* per round. Each pump requires a combined Strength of 24 to operate. A small anchor, chain, and winch are stored at both ends of the boat.

Passage to Zvern

Assuming that the party takes the shortest route to Zvern, experiences no delays, and travels the maximum time allowed per day (20 hours), the trip will take approximately four and a half days. Encounters, accidents, side trips, overnight stays in towns, and traveling only during daylight hours could significantly increase this time. The return trip will take much less time, since the route is downstream and greater headway can be made.

The current on the various rivers does not allow Squirt to make maximum speed at all times (see the sidebar for maximum headway on each waterway).

Above Ground

The depth of the rivers varies from 0′-10′. The *Mirimar* has a draft of only 1′-2′. Tal, Coffee, and Johann are skilled rivermen who automatically avoid sandbars, shoals, and snags unless their attention is diverted by combat or some other occurrence (20% chance of a collision).

Collisions result in 1d4 StP damage per MPH of speed. Thus, maximum damage going upstream on the Yante River is 2d4 points, while maximum damage going downstream on the same river is 6d4 points. Unprepared PCs must make a Dexterity check or be knocked down by the force of a collision. PCs in precarious positions, such as standing on a rail or on top of areas A or B, must make a successful saving throw vs. paralysis or be thrown overboard. PCs in metal armor may drown; see *PH,* pages 76 and 122.

If the vessel becomes grounded on a sand bar or mud bank, any reasonable attempt to refloat the *Mirimar* should succeed. Possible techniques include reversing Squirt's direction of flow (trading bow for stern); pulling from the bank using manpower, horses, or oxen; or even unloading or *levitating* the *Mirimar* so that it lifts off the obstruction.

The weather throughout the adventure remains warm and partly cloudy, with a light easterly wind rising in the afternoon.

1. The Dock in Dobay. About an hour after the PCs have settled in on the *Mirimar*, a tall, distinguished gentleman approaches the boat and stops 100′ away. He seems to be watching the boat and its crew intently.

Although his actions appear suspicious, particularly after earlier attempts to steal the cockatrices, this man is actually considering buying the craft. Wilbur Loggins recently acquired a sizeable fortune and has decided to buy several flatboats and start his own business. If confronted, Wilbur states that he is unwilling to make an offer at this time and refuses to say any more. If pestered or harassed, he becomes annoyed, then angry, and finally walks away, ignoring all attempts to speak to him. He walks to the Dykmen's Guild office and disappear inside. Mr. Loggins is well known and respected there, and the guild will not permit continued harassment inside its headquarters.

Wilbur is harmless, but he will not hesitate to call the city guard if attacked or threatened.

Wilbur Loggins: AL LN; AC 10; MV 12; F1; hp 8; THAC0 20; #AT 1; Dmg by weapon type; S 9, D 12, C 11, I 15, W 12, Ch 13; ML 10; long sword, dagger.

Wilbur wears stylish clothes

Maximum Headway by Waterway

Name	River speed	Squirt's Best Upstream	Squirt's Best Downstream
Yante River	MV 6/2 MPH	MV 6/2 MPH	MV 18/6 MPH
Lake Orchi	MV 0/0 MPH	MV 12/4 MPH	MV 12/4 MPH
Zvern Passage	MV 3/1 MPH	MV 9/3 MPH	MV 15/5 MPH
Lake Jotun	MV 0/0 MPH	MV 12/4 MPH	MV 12/4 MPH

Speeds are given both in movement rates (MV) and miles per hour for comparison to the speed of characters, encounters, and for computing daily travel.

befitting his new wealth. He currently owns two other boats, the "Dolphin's Dream" and the "Sailor's Fortune," which are tied up at nearby piers.

Attempted Heist

Just as the crew of the *Mirimar* prepares to leave, a businesslike man accompanied by four dockworkers approaches the boat. The man introduces himself as Gustof Siendorf and presents the closest person with a handwritten paper, demanding the fullest compliance with these orders immediately (see sidebar).

Gustof is no friend or confidant of Dugglesby, just another accomplice to Malvent's efforts to steal the cockatrices from the Brennans. This note should be passed around to the players, who may discover the forgery by the consistent misspelling of the word "cockatrice." Flora has a signed bill of lading from Dugglesby that can be compared to the signature on this note. The signatures do not match.

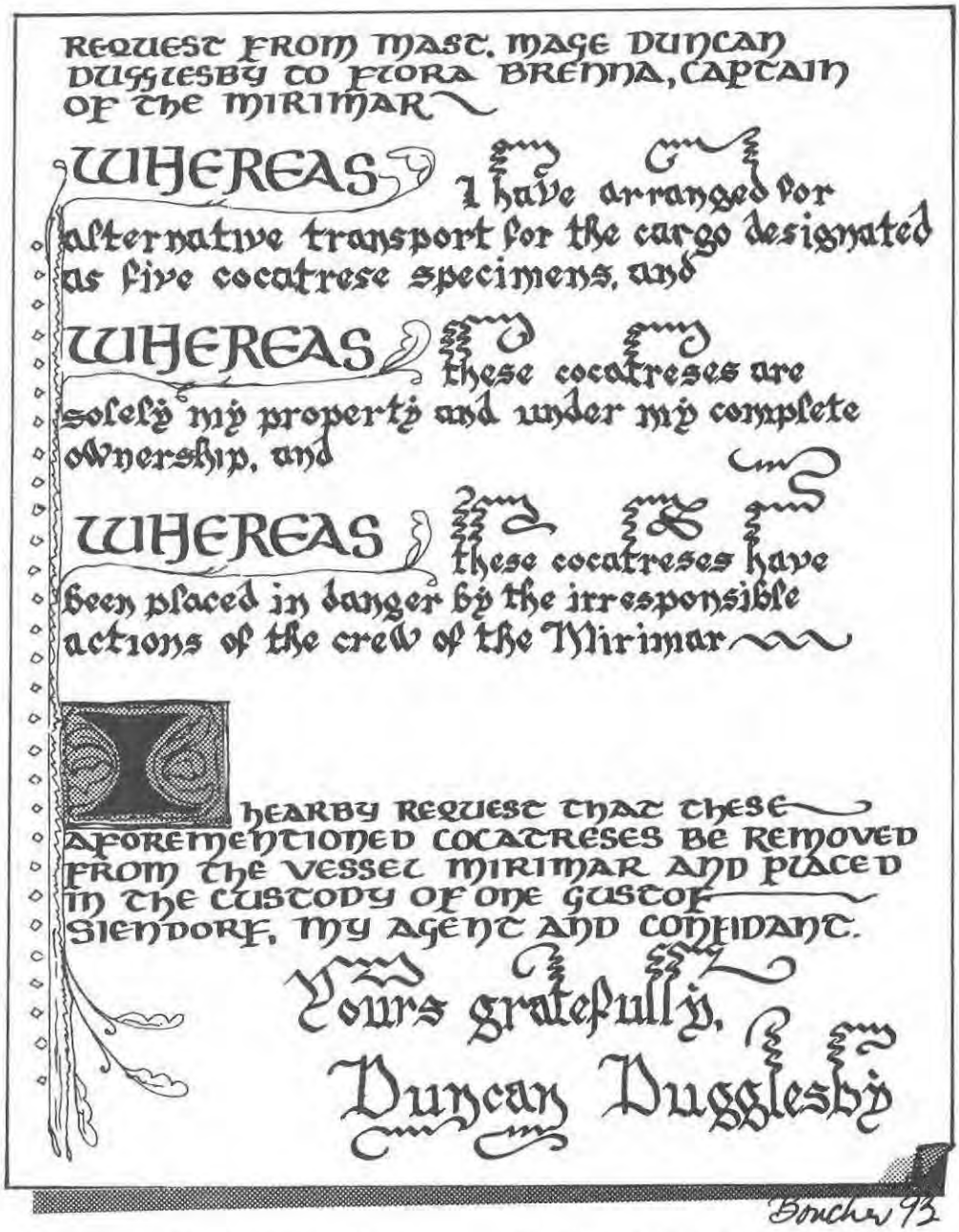
If the cockatrices are handed over to Gustof, he quickly leaves, never to be seen again. The mistake may not be discovered until the *Mirimar* reaches Zvern. If the party does not relinquish the birds to Gustof, he becomes increasingly belligerent and threatening, but strangely does not call the port authority to enforce his claim. Unless his forces outnumber the defenders by at least two to one, however, Gustof will not force a physical confrontation and will eventually leave with his nose in the air. He immediately reports to Malvent, who will proceed with his plan, *polymorphing* himself into a sparrow and flying to the town of Merrow's Bane (area 2), where he will make another attempt to seize the creatures.

Gustof Siendorf: AL N; AC 10; MV 12; 0-level human; hp 5; THAC0 20; #AT 1; Dmg by weapon type; S 5, D 10, C 11, I 14, W 12, Ch 14; ML 12; long sword.

Gustof is a very smooth fellow and often amuses himself by selling snake oil to peasants when times are slow.

Dockhands (4): AL N; AC 9; MV 12; 0-level humans; hp 4 each; THAC0 20; #AT 1; Dmg 1-4; ML 7; knives.

The dockhands will retreat in the face of any armed resistance.


REQUEST FROM MAST. MAGE DUNCAN DUGGLESBY TO FLORA BRENNA, CAPTAIN OF THE MIRIMAR
WHEREAS I have arranged for alternative transport for the cargo designated as five cocatrese specimens, and
WHEREAS these cocatreses are solely my property and under my complete ownership, and
WHEREAS these cocatreses have been placed in danger by the irresponsible actions of the crew of the Mirimar
HEARBY REQUEST THAT THESE AFOREMENTIONED COCATRESES BE REMOVED FROM THE VESSEL MIRIMAR AND PLACED IN THE CUSTODY OF ONE GUSTOF SIENDORF, MY AGENT AND CONFIDANT.
Yours gratefully,
Duncan Dugglesby
Boucher 93

2. Merrow's Bane. Merrow's Bane is much like any other town of moderate size. The wealth of the town is based partly on river commerce, partly on local agricultural products. A wide selection of wharfage is available. Everything appears calm.

While the *Mirimar* is loading 500 lbs. of cheeses bound for Yante Town, a pudgy, well-dressed man approaches one of the PCs on board and offers to buy the cockatrices for 200 gp per head, explaining that such creatures are in high demand.

Marcus Parnilius is fronting for Malvent. His assignment is to try to corrupt the PCs into selling the birds. He will go as high as 300 gp per creature, but no higher. Flora will never agree to such a plan. If the PCs indicate a sincere interest in selling the birds, she fires them immediately and calls the town guard if any PCs insist on remaining on board.

If Marcus is successful, four dockhands spring into action and quickly remove the cages from the *Mirimar*. They carry them off and disappear into the streets of the town. Marcus immediately pays for the birds in platinum and leaves quickly.

If his efforts fail, Marcus will express

sorrow at not being able to do business and leave peacefully. Like Gustof, he immediately reports his failure to the waiting Malvent, who again prepares for another attempt by sending his loyal henchman Nor Gatewise on to Velvet and riding through Brigg's Wood to Yante Town himself.

Marcus Parnilius: AL LN; AC 10; MV 12; 0-level human; hp 2; THAC0 20; #AT 1; Dmg by weapon type; S 8, D 11, C 9, I 14, W 12, Ch 13; ML 10; unarmed.

Marcus is simply doing a favor for Malvent. He will not risk his life for this endeavor. If questioned, he initially resists, but if pressured he admits his relationship with Malvent.

3. Velvet. The town of Velvet comes into view. The wharves appear normal while the *Mirimar* docks, but within the hour a crowd of angry dockmen, stevedores, and day laborers approach the boat. The committee, or more accurately, the lynch mob, demands that any undesirable elements be delivered to them for "courtesy training." There is little doubt about the injurious result of this vague educational experience.

The definition of undesirable elements is left up to the DM. It may be half-orcs or elves or dwarves but should not be humans (since the crowd is exclusively human). For maximum effect, however, at least one of the party members should be one of the undesired elements.

The crowd is angry because several men have recently lost their jobs to more highly skilled members of this "undesirable" group. They are mad and are desperately seeking a straw man to punish. The crowd is nominally lead by Nor Gatewise, a thug in the employ of Malvent who recently arrived from Merrow's Bane. Nor, backed by four of his local buddies, eggs the crowd on throughout this encounter.

The unemployment problem here is real, although it is doubtful that it would have reached this fever pitch without Nor's interference. "The only good [elf/dwarf/etc.] is a locked up one," he shouts to cheers from the crowd. His real motivation is to start a melee in which he can steal the cockatrices while the party is busy with the crowd. For this reason, neither he nor the crowd will accept any explanation why the "undesirable" party member should be left alone. The crowd of 30 men is armed with only their fists, a few belaying pins from nearby sailboats, and their anger, but they are dangerous nonetheless.

Unless the party manages to defuse the situation within five rounds, the crowd forcibly boards the *Mirimar*, grabs the party member in question, and throws him into the river. In the process, windows and deck equipment are broken, ropes cut, doors smashed, and small items stolen. Tal, Johann, and Coffee are beaten, and 1-4 men attack each PC. The town constabulary arrives 10 rounds after the crowd first begins to harass the party. The constables will not arrive in time to prevent the fight.

The easiest way to solve the problem is to disable enough of the crowd to remove its will to fight. However, brute force should not be encouraged, and the town constabulary will not take kindly to a massacre, even if it was provoked. Extra experience points should be awarded for solving this dilemma peaceably. There are several first- and second-level wizard and priest spells that would be very helpful in this situation, but possible solutions are not limited to magic. This is an excellent opportunity for the DM and the players to do some

serious role-playing!

If captured and interrogated, the thugs know nothing about Malvent. They require little effort to extract all the information they have about this incident: Nor hired them to help him harass the crew and steal the cages lashed on top if possible. Nor knows about Malvent's plan but will be much more resistant to questions than his hired cohorts. A bribe of at least 75 gp will succeed in getting him to talk. Dire threats of a personal nature have a 40% chance of success. Spells such as *ESP* are 100% successful. *Charm* and *friends* spells are 60% likely to convince him to tell what he knows.

Nor Gatewise: AL LE; AC 8; MV 12; F2; hp 16; THAC0 19; #AT 1; Dmg by weapon type; S 14, D 12, C 10, I 10, W 10, Ch 15; ML 14; XP 65; *sword +1*, leather armor.

Nor is a typical bully and likes to have significant numbers on his side before his enters a fight.

Thugs (4): AL CN; AC 10; MV 12; F1; hp 7; THAC0 20; #AT 1; Dmg by weapon type; ML 12; XP 15; club (two thugs), dagger (two thugs); 10 gp each.

Crowd (30 men): AL N; AC 9; MV 12; 0-level humans; hp 1-6; THAC0 20; #AT 1; Dmg subdual damage for fists per attack table in the *PH*, page 97, or 1-4 hp for belaying pins; ML 9; XP 15.

These men should be treated as bandits without the benefit of additional leader-types. Half have belaying pins; the rest are armed with only their fists.

4. Yante Town. The offloading and onloading of cargo at Yante Town should take several hours. Accurate maps for the Zvern Passage (areas 6-13) are available at the Dykmen's Guild office (10 gp for nonmembers, 2 gp for members). Members are warned of the increased dangers of the route. Every Dykmen's Guild member will express worry about the increasing danger of the Zvern Passage. Everyone speculates why barges have been attacked recently, but nobody really knows.

If the party wishes to interview the survivors of the last boat through the Zvern Passage, a meeting can be arranged with the convalescing crewmen. Of the five crewmen who left Zvern a week ago, only three survived the trip. New inductees of the guild, Tino, Nosi, Truka, Iokla, and Sukla Yarely were brothers operating their boat, the *Plum Tree*, between Yante Town and Dobay. On this special trip to Zvern with a cargo of textiles, however, Truka and Iokla were killed and the *Plum Tree* was badly damaged.

Although the brothers can tell you that they were attacked twice, their perceptions of the individual events differ. Each tells a different story based on where they were on the *Plum Tree* when the attacks occurred and what they saw during the chaos and confusion. (The DM should change and garble each brother's story by removing details from the description, exaggerating the nature of deeds and the extent of damage done and taken, etc.)

The truth of the attacks is as follows: Upon leaving Bad Badger's (area 12), the *Plum Tree* was attacked by a troll who demanded tribute. Refusing to hand over anything to the beast, the crew was physically attacked. Faced with an onslaught of five sword-wielding foes, the monster soon fled, but only after severely injuring Tino.

The second attack came just a few hours later. A group of kobolds led by a larger humanoid stood on a sandy shore and attacked the boat with grappling hooks and oil. The four remaining brothers managed to get away before the creatures could pull them ashore. Missile fire killed Truka and Iola, and a few successful boarders injured Nosi and Sukla. The rest of the trip was uneventful, but the weakened brothers barely managed to bring their boat into Yante Town.

Tino, Nosi, and **Sukla Yarely:** AL N; AC 10; MV 3; 0-level humans; hp 2 (5), 2 (6), 3(6); THAC0 20; #AT nil; Dmg nil; ML 5.

These men are convalescing but will be happy to warn others of the danger in the underground route. They are not fit for any type of traveling, however.

5. Lake Orchi. Numerous smaller boats pass the *Mirimar* on the trip north across Lake Orchi. Several are obviously fishing vessels from lakeside villages, others are larger trading boats. One or two of the passing boats are even elementally powered barges like the *Mirimar*, moving freight from the lakeside towns to Yante, Velvet, and even as far as Dobay. Their crews wave greetings.

> Suddenly, one of the innocent looking fishing boats turns and heads straight for you from directly to port.

> It's a collision course! Heavily armed men can be seen running back and forth across the deck. Pirates are attacking!

When Malvent saw the cockatrices still on board when the *Mirimar* arrived in Yante Town, he contacted some unscrupulous members of the Mercenaries' Guild and sent them to get the birds by force. These men are knowledgeable and experienced in pirating and have been well paid. "Where there's a will, there's a way," as Captain Loren Pegoni is fond of saying, and any way is permissible when you're a pirate.

The ship *Scorpelli* shows its true colors while 200 yards away from the *Mirimar*. Unfortunately for Captain Pegoni and her crew of 20 cutthroats, however, their sloop can manage a top MV of only 9 (or 3 MPH) in this wind. Technically, the *Mirimar* can outrun them. However, the captain planned this attack carefully, so even if the *Mirimar* turns hard to starboard and flees at full speed, the *Scorpelli* will still be within missile range for five rounds before the *Mirimar* can take advantage of her superior speed. The *Scorpelli* will not follow the *Mirimar* into the Zvern Passage.

Captain Pegoni rams the *Mirimar* with a successful attack roll against AC 10, securing it to her craft with grappling hooks, then boarding to subdue all resistance. The collision inflicts 3d4 StP damage to both vessels. There is a chance of either (or both) craft sinking as a result. Also, the collision may release the cork from the *eversmoking bottle* in the hold (area C).

The *Scorpelli* is approximately 100' long, with a beam of 25'. Its primary means of propulsion are its sails, which can be hung on its three masts. Ten or more men are required to properly sail the *Scorpelli*. The same general rules for leakage and sinking used for the *Mirimar* can be used for the *Scorpelli*. This vessel also has 100 StP in its construction but is outfitted with only one pump, located amidships.

Once all resistance has been subdued, Captain Pegoni removes everything of value from the *Mirimar*, particularly the cockatrices, and then scuttles the barge with all aboard. (Two crewmen with axes work on the lower hull until it springs a leak. It is possible that this leak could be controlled by the pumps. Captain Pegoni will not wait to actually

see the *Mirimar* sink.) She then returns to Yante Town and turns over the creatures to Malvent.

Pegoni has been paid 500 gp by Malvent to attack the *Mirimar*. If captured, she will be quick to talk, particularly if a sizeable bribe of 100 gp or more is offered or a serious threat to kill her is made. Even if she doesn't talk, a note in her cabin with the name and description of the *Mirimar*, its guards and special cargo, are enough to incriminate her. This note also gives instructions to drop-off "the goods" at a seedy warehouse near the Yante wharf. If the party tries to ambush Malvent at this rendezvous, or if the *Scorpelli* fails to return to Yante Town, Malvent *teleports* to his room at Bad Badger's and begins organizing his next move.

The pirate ship contains three chests, one with 500 gp, a second with 45 gp, 345 sp and 638 cp, and third filled with 300 gp worth of silk. The ship itself is worth about 8,000 gp with full equipment, but eyebrows in Yante Town might be raised when such a well-known ship goes up for sale.

Captain Loren Pegoni: AL CE; AC 5; MV 12; F5; hp 32; THAC0 16; #AT 1; Dmg by weapon type; S 16, D 15, C 12, I 13, W 9, Ch 16; ML 14; XP 270; *cutlass +1, leather armor +2, ring of water walking,* three daggers.

If the battle looks like it will be lost, Captain Pegoni will jump ship and run back to Yante Town using her ring. Pegoni knows that there will be other chances to do some pirating, but not if she's dead. She will even abandon her first mate, Franconi, who is probably the only person in the world who would call her "friend." She is a ruthless woman and will always be in the thick of the fight. Her crew respect her abilities and are very loyal.

Franconi, first mate: AL CE; AC 7; MV 12; F3; hp 15; THAC0 18; #AT 1; Dmg by weapon type; S 17, D 12, C 14, I 8, W 7, Ch 15; ML 14; XP 175; leather armor, shield, *short sword +1,* potion of *invulnerability.*

Franconi will use his potion only if the pirates seem to be losing the battle or Captain Pegoni is seriously injured. He has stuck with the captain from the beginning when they beat up water-taxi pilots, first in Dobay, then in Yante Town. Franconi is secretly in love with this merciless woman and would willingly give his life to save her.

Pirates (20): AL CN; AC 10; MV 12; 0-level humans; hp 5; THAC0 20; #AT 1; Dmg by weapon type; ML 12; XP 15 (×15), 35 (×5).

These men have been pirating before and know the drill well. Five of them climb the rigging and use short bows to pepper the combatants with missile fire. The other 15 secure grappling hooks and close with the *Mirimar*'s crew using cutlasses, hand axes, and short swords. Only if the battle goes poorly will the archers drop from the rigging and join the melee. A popular technique of this crew is for a second wave of attackers to swing over to the other ship from the rigging and attack defenders from behind. None of the crewmen know who commissioned this job.

6. Entrance to the Zvern Passage.

> The entrance to the Zvern Passage is a huge cave opening in the side of a tall stone cliff. The cliff seems to loom over the boat as you enter the underground river. Inside it is pitch dark. As the light recedes behind the *Mirimar*, you wonder whether you will ever see the sun again.

The river route is unlit except where noted. The river current is about MV 6, or just less than 2 MPH flowing south from area 13 to area 6. At maximum speed, a MV 6 headway is possible.

The ceiling of the channel varies from 100′ down to 0′. Tal, Johann, or Coffee can avoid low spots if they have sufficient light, but if they are ever distracted, make a collision check to see if the ship strikes the ceiling (as outlined in the "Above Ground" section above). Collisions result in 1d4 StP damage for each MPH of speed. In the event of a collision, the cages on top of the *Mirimar* take the full force of the collision 30% of the time, while the *Mirimar* will sustain the full damage the remaining 70%. Also, the *eversmoking bottle* may be jarred open (see area C, chest 5).

There is always sufficient height and depth for passage somewhere in the channel, so the way is never blocked. Other streams and rivers too small to be noted on the map periodically join the underground river by way of waterfalls or small inlets.

A colony of bats have made their home in a dark corner of the entrance tunnel. The lights from the *Mirimar* confuse them, and they swarm from their resting places in hopes of finding quieter (and darker) accommodations.

Bats (500): INT animal; AL N; AC 8 (4); MV 1, fly 24 (B); HD 1-2 hp; THAC0 20; #AT 1; Dmg 1; SA swarm puts out torches and disrupts spells; SD AC improved from 8 to 4 in ideal conditions; SZ T; ML 4; XP 15; MC1.

Due to their strict diet of fruit and insects, the bats have no interest in attacking the party for a meal but will harass the *Mirimar* and its crew, confusing spell-casting and frightening the Brennans until the boat moves beyond the colony (in 1-6 rounds) or the bow and stern lights are extinguished. Without lights, Tal, Johann, or Coffee will have trouble steering the *Mirimar*.

7. Waterfall. This waterfall rises only 10′ high from the northeast edge of a deep basin, but it makes the east branch of the river impassible to craft the size of the *Mirimar*. There is no danger when approaching this obstruction from the south (except a good soaking). If the barge approaches the waterfall from the north, however, and goes over the cataract, the boat will take 5d6 StP damage and have a 25% chance of turning over. If it overturns, it will sink in 2-12 rounds, regardless of its hull integrity. Everyone on deck must make saving throws vs. paralyzation to remain on deck, or be knocked overboard. Unsecured objects are automatically thrown overboard.

The *Mirimar* can reverse and avoid the waterfall if the decision to do so is made more than 50′ away from the obstacle. A distant roaring should alert careful PCs to take this measure, although the turns and twists of the passage hide the waterfall regardless of available light.

8. Canoes. Three canoes are beached along the western channel, near a naturally formed tunnel that leads off into the Underdark. A single dwarf, who speaks only dwarven, guards the boats. His friends left him here and went off into the tunnel three days ago, and he hasn't heard from them since. The boats contain food and water for 10 men for about a week, as well as other equipment including rope, spikes, crampons, pickaxes, grappling hooks, torches, lanterns, and shovels.

Thaknar the dwarf is very worried about his friends. He explains that his party set out from Bad Badger's and came downstream to this point follow-

ing an old treasure map. He can warn the party about a possible ambush by numerous kobolds further upstream (area 9). Thaknar and his party managed to sneak by the ambush by being quiet and quick. He knows nothing about the troll at area 11 but can correctly answer any questions about Bad Badger's and the Zvern Passage.

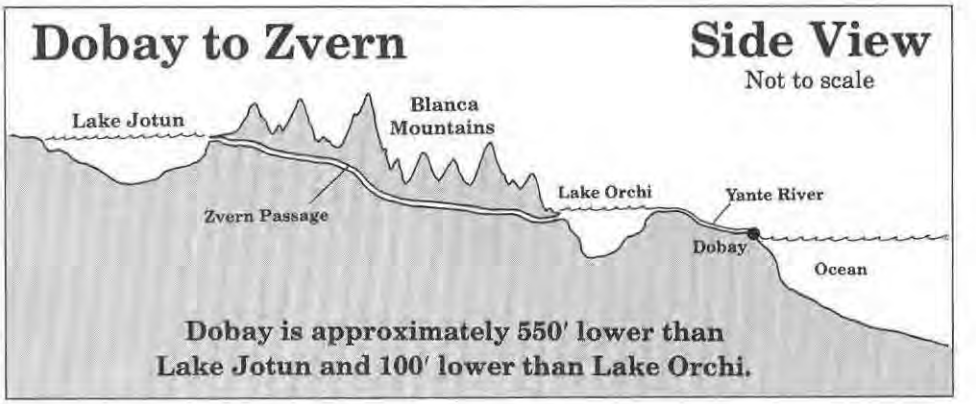
Thaknar (dwarf): AL N; AC 4; MV 9; F4; hp 30; THAC0 17; #AT 1; Dmg by weapon type; ML 11; *battle axe +2, chain mail +1, horn of fog.* Thaknar's dagger, shield, and other adventuring equipment are piled up next to one of the canoes. He will defend the boats but will retreat if faced with overwhelming odds.

9. Kobolds. Lead by Yar, a particularly clever half-orc, a group of kobolds has decided to try a little banditry on the river. Thus far, they have been moderately successful. Since none of these creatures needs light, no light will be used until the trap is sprung. Lookouts are placed high in the rocks on the western edge of the peninsula (area 9A) to observe boats traveling upstream. Others (area 9B) have a good view of those craft coming downstream. There is only a 10% chance that the bandits will be surprised.

9A. Kobold Ambush. The creatures have set up an ambush to harass passing shipping using three ballistae armed with grappling hooks. The 100′ ceiling of the cavern allows these weapons to operate unhindered.

When a boat comes into view, the creatures wait until it has rounded the bend and then attack. The ballista crews shoot grappling hooks onto the craft using the three ballistae (a hit vs. AC 10 is all that is needed). The weapons are all securely tied down to strong wooden stakes sunk deep into the sand. Once the lines are secure, winches are used to draw the craft to shore for hand-to-hand fighting. Other kobolds provide missile fire and close to attack the boat's crew. Yar stands back and lets his troops do the dirty work, then rushes into battle at the last moment.

In truth, Yar is a mercenary officer in the employ of the drow living under the Blanca Mountains. He is currently conducting a guerrilla operation intended to discourage commercial traffic in the Zvern Passage. The drow leaders who conceived of this plan figured that the only way to preserve the autonomy of the drow from future encroachment was to discourage commerce with the outside world. Yar and his diminutive mercenaries are the first of several attempts to achieve this goal. Yar is not connected with Malvent's plan in any way.



Yar (half-orc): AL LE; AC 7; MV 12; F4; hp 30; THAC0 17; #AT 1; Dmg by weapon type; ML 12; XP 270; *long sword +1,* leather armor, shield, dagger, spear, *oil of fiery burning* (×3).

Yar is the first to retreat from a losing battle, grabbing his equipment out of his tent in camp (area C) and heading off into the Underdark, leaving his troops to their fate. He will use his *oil of fiery burning* to the best advantage.

Kobolds (30): INT average; AL LE; AC 7; MV 6; HD 1-4 hp; THAC0 20; #AT 1; Dmg by weapon type; SZ S; ML 8; XP 15; MC1. Half are armed with bows and short swords, 30% with clubs, and 20% with spears and short swords. Each kobold has 1-6 sp.

Three teams of two kobolds each continue to man and fire the ballistae until all three have secured grappling hooks and the target craft has been grounded. They will use the same escape route as Yar, but not before he retreats.

9B. Longboats. Two longboats clutter the sandy beach. These boats are damaged but could be used in a pinch. They are leaky but manageable.

9C. Bandit Camp. The bandits' camp is located among the rocks, far enough back from the waterline to be concealed from view of anyone passing on the river. Miscellaneous equipment and bedrolls lie scattered around the area. Yar's tent contains a cot, a chest that holds clothing and personal items, a backpack with adventuring gear, 56 gp, 34 sp, a scroll with *whispering wind* and *web* spells written at the 3rd level of ability, and a potion of *extra-healing.* A nearby tunnel leads down into the Underdark and provides a convenient escape route.

10. Piercers. A group of piercers has chosen to inhabit this particular spot on the river. All are ravenous and will attack. Those that miss the PCs either hit the *Mirimar* for 1-2 StP damage or fall into the river.

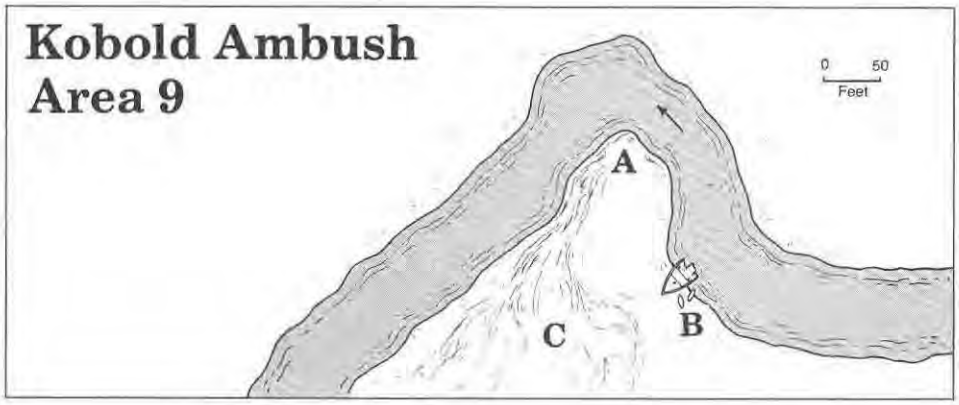
Piercers (4): INT non; AL N; AC 3; MV 1; HD 2; hp 9 each; THAC0 19; #AT 1; Dmg 2-12; SA surprise; SZ S; ML 8; XP 65; MC1.

11. Freshwater Troll: A scrag has recently made its home in this huge underground lake. It surfaces in front of the *Mirimar* and demands tribute—preferably something to eat—and will not attack if this is granted. If the troll is refused, it attacks fiercely. The scrag will not fight to the death, as it knows there will soon be other prey.

Freshwater troll (scrag): INT low; AL CE; AC 3; MV 12, swim 15; HD 5+5; hp 35; THAC0 15; #AT 3; Dmg 2-5/2-5/3-12; SD regeneration; SZ L; ML 14; XP 650; MC1.

The troll's lair on one of the numerous small sand and rock islands contains the bones of several kobolds, pigs, and chickens, in addition to 34 sp, a chest containing 50 gp worth of fine cloth, and a suit of plate mail in a waterproof bag. The mail is enchanted so that it will never rust.

12. Bad Badger's Underdark Tavern and Spelunking Outfitters. Bad Badger's is a bustling business owned by a half-orc with a good head for business. If Badger doesn't have something, he can usually get it without too



much trouble. The half-orc gave up a distinguished adventuring career to set up this business. He has been running it for four years and plans to expand the tavern with some roulette wheels and gambling tables soon.

Interracial strife among the patrons is uncommon, but Badger pragmatically sees it as an inevitable aspect of commerce. The most aggressively rude and antagonistic patrons are quickly cooled off in the lake by the tavern's two human bouncers, Jim and Slim. These twins are intensely loyal to Badger and will do almost anything that he requests. Fights among the patrons are discouraged, but once one starts, Jim and Slim can usually keep it from getting out of hand and doing damage to the establishment. They will not risk their necks to save someone who has gotten in over his head, however, especially if that individual started the fight.

Bad Badger's is a neutral point in the Underdark, and Badger doesn't want to jeopardize that status by taking sides in a common bar brawl. This is a rough-and-tumble place and not for the faint at heart.

Bad Badger (half-orc): AL LN; AC 4; MV 12; F6; hp 65; THAC0 15; #AT 1 (3/2 with long sword); Dmg by weapon type; S 17, D 13, C 17, I 14, W 12, Ch 15; ML 16; shield, *sword of life stealing +2, studded leather armor +2, ring of swimming;* specialized in long sword; proficient in dagger, long bow, club.

Badger runs a very profitable concession here, and if he needs to remove somebody to keep it running, so be it. He will not abandon Jim and Slim under any circumstances and will be very angry if they are killed. Badger is a powerful figure in the Underdark. Gaining him as a friend can be a great advantage to survival; making him an enemy can be a fatal mistake.

Slim and **Jim** (twins): AL LN; AC 4; MV 12 (24 with *boots*); F4; hp 35 each; THAC0 17 (13 with *girdle*); #AT 1 (3/2 with dagger or quarterstaff); Dmg by weapon type; S 12 (21 with *girdle*), D 16, C 13, I 9, W 7, Ch 8; ML 16; *girdle of frost giant strength, boots of speed, dagger +2*; specialized with dagger and quarterstaff.

Although Slim and Jim appear harmless, they are not. The twins dress exactly alike and many find them very hard to tell apart. Jim hates to bathe, however, so it is easier to distinguish them by smell than by sight. Slim has made a concerted effort to clean up his language and uses very little slang and gutter-talk.

Because Badger rescued the twins from derro slavers as teens, they will never betray him. Slim stays loyal to Badger because of his childhood experience, but has dreams of seeing the big world someday. Jim is much more content than Slim and enjoys the power his position and magical items give him. He speaks with a wide-ranging vocabulary derived from the mercenaries and adventurers he spends his time with. The twins will not interfere in any combat that takes place outside the walls of Bad Badger's. "You shouldn't be here if you can't handle yourself," Jim says to any who will listen.

Ground Floor

12A. Pier and Beach. Several small boats are firmly tied to a long pier that juts out into the lake. A few figures can be seen in the pools of light cast by the *continual light* globes spaced along the wharf. A sandy beach stretches for several hundred feet to the south. At the land's end of the pier, a two-story wooden structure has been built into the cave wall. The sign hanging above the door reads "Bad Badger's Tavern and Spelunking Outfitters." A stylized badger carrying a shovel and pickaxe adorns the sign. Two dockhands are waiting to assist with offloading the dwarven ale that the *Mirimar* has contracted to deliver here.

Dockhands (2): AL N; AC 10; MV 12; 0-level human; hp 4, 3; THAC0 20; #AT 1; Dmg by weapon type; ML 7; knives.

12B. Common Room. Scores of dwarves, humans, gnomes, and half-orcs, as well as a few other inhabitants of the Underdark, enjoy the chance to rest, eat, trade stories, boast, organize expeditions, send ransom notices, collect bounties, and gamble away treasure in this huge room. The smells of food and smoke from numerous pipes fills the air, joined by the tuneless shouting of bawdy mining songs. Two dwarven bartenders fill guests' drink orders, while a burly waiter serves food to the rowdy crowd. If any place held adventure, this would be it! Food and drink are available at normal cost, and there are a few rooms still available for the night.

Dwarven bartenders (2): AL N; AC 10; MV 9; F1; hp 8, 7; THAC0 20; #AT 1; Dmg by weapon type; SD save at four levels higher; SZ S; ML 12; leather armor, knife. A loaded heavy crossbow and a club are kept under the bar for emergencies.

Waiter (human): AL N; AC 10; MV 12; F1; hp 8; THAC0 20; #AT 1; Dmg by weapon type; ML 12; leather apron, dagger.

12C. Equipment Shop. A smaller room in back holds all kinds of weapons, boating equipment, mining tools, and miscellaneous paraphernalia. The manufacturing techniques of many different races are easily recognizable. Any supplies listed in the *PH, Dungeoneer's Survival Guide,* or *Wilderness Survival Guide* are available here at normal cost. One wall is filled with notices advertising boats available for charter, hirelings and mercenaries for hire, and other services available. A small, wizened human named Manny is the manager of the equipment shop and can quickly strike a bargain to buy or sell. Deals for the few magical items available are always made directly with Badger, however, and will be very costly. There

is only a 10% chance of finding any particular magical item here.

Manny: AL CN; AC 10; MV 9; 0-level human; hp 5; THAC0 20; #AT 1; Dmg by weapon type; ML 12.

Manny is a tough bargainer and is shrewd in his business dealings. It would be very tough to put one over on this old man. Manny is Bad Badger's paternal uncle.

12D. Storage Room. This rough-hewn and disorganized room holds a wide variety of boxes, barrels, crates, bags, and chests full of food, ale, equipment, and other supplies used in running the inn. A separate part of the room is reserved for paid storage by guests. The door is adorned with two heavy locks, and several magical runes also decorate the door.

12E. Kitchen and Pantry. This bustling, steamy room is filled with bubbling pots and busy cooks. The two cooks are kept busy filling orders coming in from the common room. They in turn keep the waiter running to deliver the meals before the food gets cold.

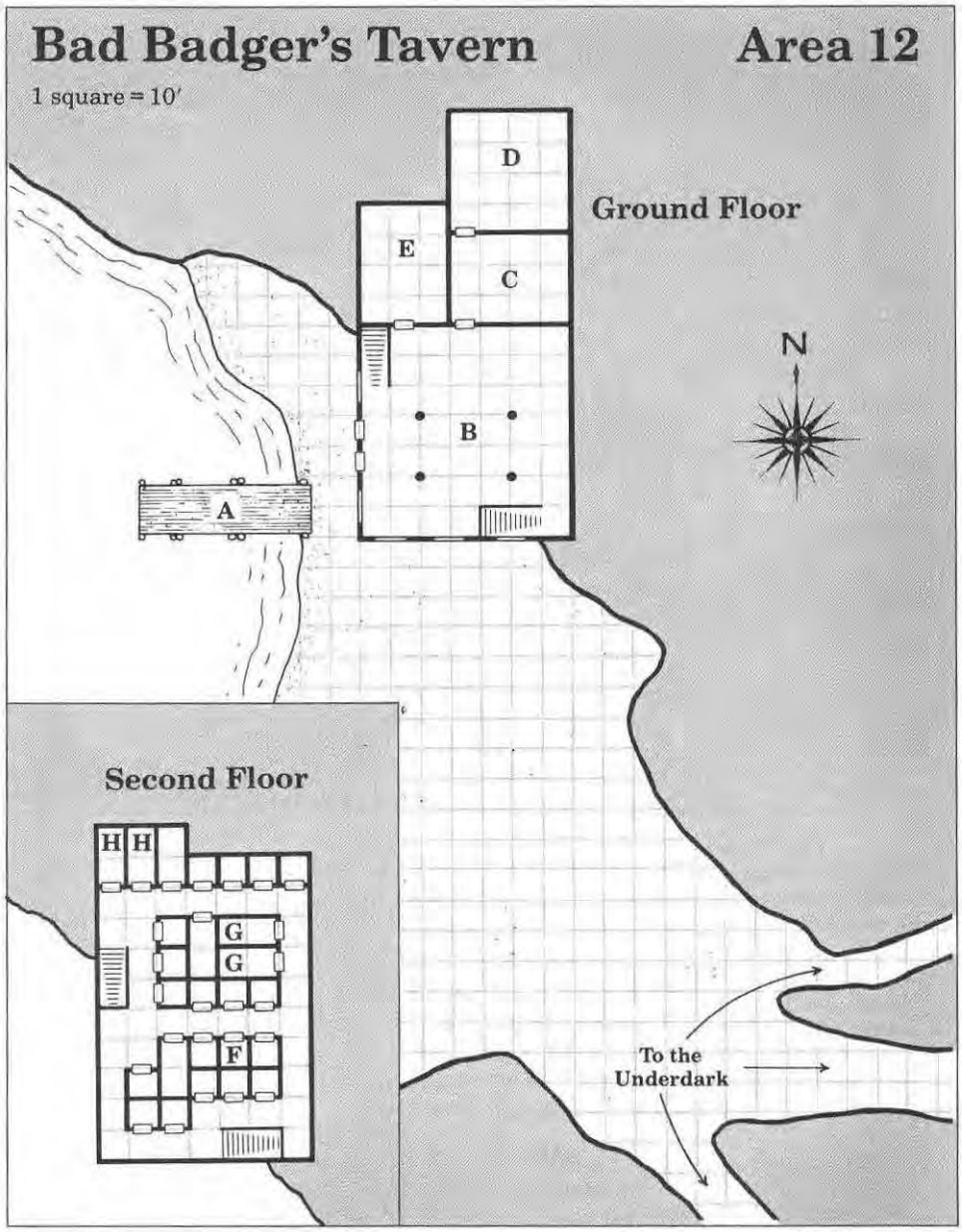
Cooks (2): AL CN; AC 10; MV 12; 0-level humans; hp 5; THAC0 20; #AT 1; Dmg by weapon type; ML 10.

Bad Badger hired these two accomplished cooks from a high-class restaurant in Zvern. They can prepare the favorite dishes of many of the inhabitants of the Underdark. Although unarmed, the cooks can quickly find dozens of knives with which to defend themselves. They will not join bar fights.

Second Floor

Most of the private rooms upstairs are already rented to various people, many of whom are enjoying a meal and a drink downstairs. All the rooms are locked. Their contents are uniform and rather ordinary: two beds with sheets and blankets, a table with four chairs, a colorful area rug, a pitcher and wash basin, and a large sea chest for storage. Everything is clean and in good repair. The inn is not full, and a few rooms are still available for rent at 150% of the prices listed in the *PH*.

Four or five larger rooms have been set aside for the staff. These rooms contain ordinary personal belongings: clothing, mementos, some weapons, a few letters, etc. These rooms are also locked.



12F. Malvent's Room. Malvent rents this room by the month and uses it as a home base for his Underdark explorations. He will *teleport* here from Yante Town if he is ambushed at the rendezvous there or if Captain Pegoni fails in her task. He begins organizing his next attempt immediately by memorizing spells from his book to replace those he has used.

This room is always locked and contains Malvent's spell book and a limited selection of components and other miscellaneous items, including maps of the nearby tunnels and a sack containing 56 gp and 340 sp. A letter from a drow captain suggesting an alliance with Malvent also hints at the movements of some well-organized forces in the Underdark, which could explain why the Zvern Passage has become so dangerous recently. Yar's name is specifically mentioned in this letter as a leader in a guerrilla effort to close the Underdark to outsiders (see area 9).

12G. Common Baths. Guests can come here to clean up after a long day adventuring or mining. Baths are available for 3 cp (an additional 1 cp each for

hot water and soap). All the races of the Underdark use this amenity, producing some startling results. Two bath attendants and a guard keep things under control. There are separate baths for males and females.

Gnome bath attendants (2): AL N; AC 10; MV 6; HD 1; hp 5; THAC0 20; #AT 1; Dmg by weapon type; SA +1 to hit goblins and kobolds; SD save at four levels higher; ML 10; unarmed.

Half-orc guard: AL CN; AC 8; MV 12; F1; hp 7; THAC0 20; #AT 1; Dmg by weapon type; ML 15; leather armor, short sword.

The guard is congenial and friendly but still keeps a sharp eye out for theft or assault.

12H. Water Closets. The communal water closets are also separated by sex. They are kept clean by Badger's staff. Large locked cabinets hold extra sheets, blankets, towels, soap, bath salts, pillows, etc.

Malvent Again

At some time during the *Mirimar*'s stay at Bad Badger's, Malvent will exit his room, pick up his four hired mercenaries from the common room, and approach the *Mirimar*. Malvent's strategy is to use his *wand of size alteration* to shrink everyone who gets in his way. The four mercenaries are primarily to protect his advance.

Using his mercenaries as cover, Malvent approaches the *Mirimar* and uses his wand on whoever is on deck. When he has shrunk most of the resistance to a harmless size, he lets the fighters clear away the rest before calling the dockworkers to unload the cockatrices onto a waiting cart drawn by two mules. He then makes his escape into the Underdark. If Malvent is reduced to 25% of his original hit points, he will flee into the Underdark. Details of pursuit, if any, are left up to the DM.

Half-orc mercenaries (3): AL LN; AC 4; MV 9; F3; hp 21, 20, 19; THAC0 18; #AT 1; Dmg by weapon type; ML 15; XP 65; chain mail, shield, long sword, 25 gp each (the fee that Malvent paid them).

Mercenary hero (human): AL LN; AC 3, MV 6; F3; hp 20; THAC0 18; #AT 1 (3/2 with sword); Dmg by weapon type; ML 16; XP 65; long sword (specialized), plate mail, 40 gp (his fee).

If his mercenaries are killed, Malvent will use his *animate dead* spell to revive them. These newly created zombies will continue to press the attack until they are destroyed. Malvent uses his *scare* and *fear* spells to good effect with these creatures. If they are successfully turned and flee from the *Mirimar*, further confusion might result as the creatures encounter the patrons of Bad Badger's.

Zombies (4): INT non; AL N; AC 3 or 4 (×3); MV 6; HD 2; hp 14, 12 (×3); THAC0 19; #AT 1; Dmg 1-8; SD immune to sleep, *charm*, *hold*, poisons, and cold-based spells; SZ M; ML special; XP 65; MC1; armed and armored as in life.

These newly created creatures will forsake their weapons and attack all Malvent's opponents, continuing to do so until victorious or destroyed.

13. Passage Exit.

> As you proceed down this dark passage, a tiny light becomes visible far in front of you, too far away to discern what it is. As you draw closer,

however, you can see the light is the end of the tunnel. As you emerge from the low tunnel entrance, you can feel the sun [or the cool night breeze], which feels wonderful after your long journey underground. Zvern must not be far now!

The tunnel entrance is only 30' high and exits from a rocky outcropping on a forested hillside.

14. Stone Skippers.

The woods on the shores of Lake Jotun are covered with beautiful trees. Birds flit from branch to branch, singing as they move. In the distance, you can see a group of human figures skipping rocks along the lake shore. All is peaceful and pastoral.

The rock skippers are not ordinary men. On seeing the boat, these three young hill giants stop their game and begin playfully throwing rocks at the boat for 1-10 hp damage each. They try not to hit any people on board, but challenge each other to do as much damage to the boat as possible. Use the table in the sidebar to determine the locations of the rock strikes. The giants continue their bombardment until the *Mirimar* is out of range (in 1d2 rounds). If serious resistance is raised, the giants begin throwing rocks in earnest.

The giants must hit AC 10 to score a strike on the *Mirimar*. Stones striking the ship may jar the *eversmoking bottle* open (see the *Mirimar*, area C).

Location of Rock Strikes
Area 14

Forward	01-25
Area A (Cages)	26-30
Amidships	31-50
Cargo Doors	51-55
Area B (Cages)	56-65
Aft	66-90
Crew Hit (Random PC or NPC)	91-00

Hill giants, young (3): INT low; AL CE; AC 5; MV 12; HD 11; hp 50, 47, 45; THAC0 9; AT #1; Dmg 1-6, or 1-10 with rocks; SA hurl rocks; SZ H; ML 13; XP 2,000; MC1 (Hill giant, modified).

The rocks have an effective range of 200 yards. The giants will follow the boat along the lakeshore until they have taken 50% damage or the boat moves out of range. Because the young giants are only being playful, they will not fight to the death.

15. Zvern. Zvern is the hub of the commerce that travels on Lake Jotun. When the *Mirimar* reaches Zvern, Flora thanks the party and pays them if the *Mirimar* and its cargo arrived safe and secure. Of course, if the party failed to adequately protect the boat or its crew, Flora will refuse all or part of the promised payment. She will not hesitate to call the city guard should it become necessary to deal with belligerent PCs.

If the boat arrives in the evening and the Brennans and the party are still on good terms, Flora will allow the PCs to remain on board for one more night, but will expect them to be on their way in the morning.

A moving company with excellent credentials and documentation will come to pick up Dugglesby's boxes and pets within hours after the *Mirimar* docks. Dugglesby will vouch for them if the party checks wants to check their story.

Concluding the Adventure

If Malvent steals the cockatrices away from the *Mirimar*, Dugglesby's research will be set back by months, ruining his presentation at the Prestidigitators' Convention. He will certainly spread the word among his friends and peers that the party is unreliable, which may doom the PCs' chance of future employment in Zvern and Dobay. Malvent, however, will be overjoyed.

If the party manages to defeat Malvent's plans, they will have made a determined and ruthless enemy who, though not especially powerful now, will grow in strength and influence as time passes. He could become a major opponent to the PCs, returning again and again to throw obstacles in their path or provide a lethal surprise when they least expect it.

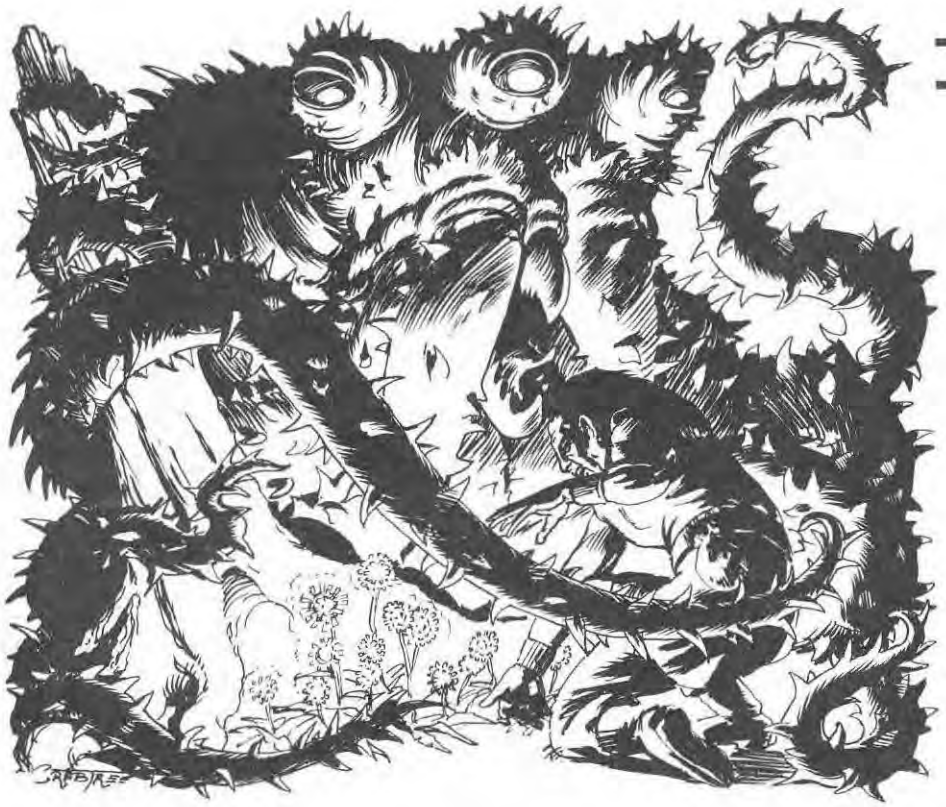
Further adventures that might arise from this scenario include guarding the *Mirimar* on its the return trip to Dobay; conducting investigations into why the Zvern Passage has become unsafe; hunting down Yar, Captain Pegoni, or Malvent; taking a closer look at Bad Badger's; or even doing a little exploring down some of the underground passageways, perhaps with Thaknar as a guide. Dugglesby may contact the party to investigate the ruins shown on the map he owns (see chests 6 and 7 in the *Mirimar*). Zvern itself may be the base for a number of adventures in the north, or south into the Blanca Mountains.

This adventure is designed in part to be an introduction to the complex and vast world of the Underdark and to inspire curiosity about the wonders that might be found deep within the earth. Bad Badger's would be an ideal starting point for the PCs' explorations. Ω

Our Cheerful Playtesters for This Issue Were:

Gerald Stitt, Lori Harohaney, Barry Johnson, Countess Johnson, Richard Brown, Gary Brown, Lawrence Brown, John A. Reed, James Zangmaster, Paul Schmit, Anne Brown, Alan Grimes, Richard Patton, Troy Guffey, Thomas Chambers, Sam Orlando, Bryan Conry, Brian Gates, and Brian Hare.

Thanks for all your help!



MAYHEM AT MIDNIGHT

BY TRAE STRATTON

Dazzling beauty teams up with a tentacled beast.

Artwork by James Crabtree

Trae lives in College Point, New York and dedicates this, his first publication, to Sunrise, Mom, Pop, Sis, Tugboat, Sarah, and to The Arsenal—who always found a way and made legends of themselves.

"Mayhem at Midnight" is an AD&D® game DRAGONLANCE® adventure for 5-8 player characters of levels 4-7 (about 35 total levels). Though playable with any mixture of classes, races, and alignments, an extra warrior may be helpful. The story can be inserted into an existing campaign in any temperate forest that is considered dangerous by those who live near it. Lunitari must be at least half full, but a full moon is recommended to throw wary adventurers off the nature of the true danger. The main monsters in this adventure are taken from MC4 *Monstrous Compendium,* DRAGONLANCE appendix, but inventive DMs may wish to use them in a different setting.

Adventure Background

About three months ago, Vlade the Deceiver, a Black-Robed illusionist of some renown, hired seven intrepid human fighters to collect seedpods from a patch of shimmerweed, a rare flower growing deep in the forest. Though the job was beneath their abilities (or so the adventurers thought), it paid well and they accepted. They were given directions, a brief description of the plant, and a warning to be well away from the flowers come nightfall.

The warriors took no chances. Aside from a brief skirmish with some ogres, they followed the wizard's instructions, collected the seedpods, and were soon on their way home. Making good progress, the party settled in a clearing for a short rest and an afternoon meal. Then things got ugly.

The ogres they had tangled with several days before found some friends and caught up with the humans at the clearing. The ambush went well, and soon several of the party were knocked senseless, to be devoured later. Two of the seven warriors managed to flee the massacre with their lives, and one of them even had a pouch of seeds to collect on.

The ogres rummaged through their spoils and had a feast right there in the clearing to celebrate the victory. The creatures had no use for the

seeds, so they simply tossed them aside. The drunken revelry ended late that night, with the ogres passed out in the clearing.

But fate had not yet finished with the glade. Late that night, while moving through the woods in search of a new lair, a wyndlass caught a glimpse of the ogres' fading campfire. The tentacled horror silently wound its way into the clearing; when it left again the area was devoid of life and its belly was full. Deciding this was as good a place as any to feed, the monster groped 30 yards back into the woods and sank a new lair into the soft earth behind some low-lying hills. The lair was close enough to pick off anything heading into the clearing. Should the need arise, the wyndlass could reach the clearing itself with minimal effort.

The wyndlass had chosen well, for the clearing was at the juncture of several game trails used frequently by animals and humanoids. The creature fed regularly for a time, but after several months the game became scarce, especially at night. Finally, starvation made the creature desperate. Hoisting itself from its damp lair, it made for the clearing in search of food.

As the wyndlass surged along, it used the thick, strong trees along its path as anchors for its tentacles, pulling itself forward at an even faster pace than it could normally manage. When it reached the clearing, the creature was suddenly confronted by a blinding barrage of colored light.

The wyndlass blinked rapidly, clearing its vision of the confounding array of luminescent light, and made a wonderful discovery. There in the glade was a party of dazed hobgoblins. Hungrily, the wyndlass plucked off as many hobgoblins as it could carry and slid back to its lair without a fight.

The wyndlass, though not a genius, was smart enough to understand that the fragile flowers had something to do with the dazzling lights, and that the lights could stun prey into immobility. Recognizing the opportunity of a lifetime, the wyndlass decided to take advantage of its good fortune. As prey drifted into the clearing and was subjugated by the flowers, the creature could glide in from the darkness for the kill. The wyndlass wasn't very fond of leaving its lair, but the beast had a voracious appetite, and the promise of easy and plentiful prey couldn't be ignored.

The wyndlass began to work with the shimmerweed, timing its attacks to coincide with the onslaught of flickering light. Now, after many repetitions, the wyndlass executes the trap with lethal perfection.

For the DUNGEON MASTER™

The PCs have been traveling through the forest for several days, just one part of an even longer journey toward their next adventure. Encounters in the woods are up to the DM's discretion, but the PCs should see and hear shadowy forms, some vaguely human, stomping through the forest in search of prey.

The adventure begins near midnight, several hours after the PCs have found a decent clearing and made camp for the night. Unfortunately, they have chosen the deadliest site in the entire forest.

The DM must be careful to make this clearing seem like any other; therefore there is no boxed text to be read to the players. Unless you normally run a highly detailed campaign, a lengthy description will only tip the players off. Simply incorporate the sequence of events below along with their casual descriptions when the time is right.

As the party winds through the forest, the hour grows late. Toward evening, a thick darkness rapidly falls over everything; it is necessary to call a halt. (To be caught wandering in the blackness of the wood is a mistake few live to make twice!) The PCs find a suitable clearing next to a lazily flowing brook, and the party stops for the night. This area, similar to their earlier campsites, is dotted with typical wild flowers, lush grass, and dandelions.

Anyone who insists on searching the clearing has a 75% chance of finding something lying about the perimeter. Roll 1d10 and consult the following table:

1-3 **Humanoid bone** (Ogre, goblin, orc, elf, dwarf, human, or other)
4-9 **Animal bone** (Deer, wolf, bear, rabbit, and so on, but no monster bones)
10 **Rusted weapon** (Dagger, knife, arrowhead, or broken spear)

The adventurers should follow their normal routine (dinner, prayer, spell memorization, and conversation) with no suspicions that anything will happen.

Midway through the meal, a lone wolf calls out solemnly from somewhere deep within the forest. Soon the blood-chilling howl is joined by several other wolves, and there is no mistaking the signs of a wolf pack forming. The fearful sounds of the wolf pack tearing down an animal just outside the clearing should keep the PCs sweating through the night.

Lunitari rises steadily, nearly full as the PCs prepare for bed and set up watches. The pale white orb reaches its zenith around midnight, and only PC guards will be awake when the mayhem begins. If the PCs break camp and run, they avoid the worst of it but may get lost and meet the ogres in the woods at night.

The Dancing Lights

The dandelions in the crescent shaped patch around the north and eastern ends of the clearing are the first threat.

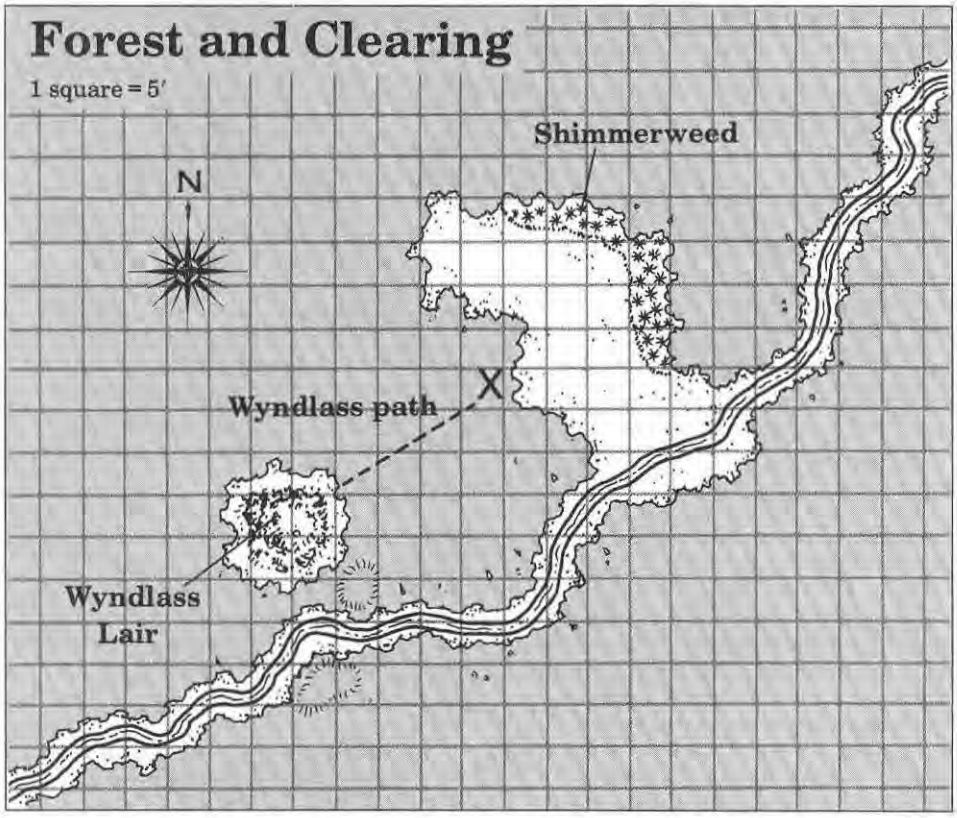
Shimmerweed (26): INT non; AL nil; AC 8; MV nil; HD 1 hp; THAC0 not applicable; #AT 0; Dmg nil; SA confusion; SZ T (11" tall); ML 20; XP 35; MC4.

Only keen observation will unmask this natural deception and reveal the true nature of the plant. Under close inspection, the wildflowers appear to be cast of fine spun glass and are so delicate that the slightest blow shatters them into dust.

Close to midnight, the shimmerweed patch comes to life. The flowers, enchanted by the moonlight, spray forth a dazzling iridescent display of flickering light.

Anyone in the clearing who sees these "dancing lights" is affected by the display as if a *confusion* spell had been cast by a 10th-level Red Robed wizard. The combined power of the patch can affect 26 Hit Dice or levels, one for each flower, and has a maximum duration of 12 rounds. A saving throw vs. spells (at a −2 penalty and adjusted for high Wisdom scores) should be made when each PC first sees the lights.

PCs who save successfully have fought off the dazzling power of the shimmerweed and may act unhindered for the entire encounter. Those who fail the save become bewildered and must check each round for individual reactions. Roll 1d10 and consult the chart below until the spell duration expires or the "Wander away" result occurs:



1 **Wander away** (unless prevented) for duration of spell.

2-6 **Stand confused** one round (then roll again).

7-9 **Attack nearest creature** for one round (then roll again).

10 **Act normally** for one round (then roll again).

Confused PCs may defend themselves if attacked, but they are still subject to the above effects the following round. Those who wander away from the clearing walk off in a random direction determined by the DM and are likely to become lost in the forest. At the DM's option, they are attacked by a wandering predator.

Besides being vulnerable to any form of trampling, crushing, or slicing, shimmerweed patches are very sensitive to bright light. Sudden exposure to spells such as *light* or *continual light* overloads the petals, causing the plants to explode into dust, destroyed forever. Plants killed in any other way sprout and grow back again in about a month.

The Attack

This is the moment the hidden beast has been waiting for. Creeping forth from its oily lair while the party is enthralled, the wyndlass attacks with its deadly barbed tentacles. Read the following to the players after the saving throws are rolled:

> As the rainbow of colors flickers and flashes about the glade, many of you stagger mindlessly, victimized by the dazzling effects besieging your senses. Suddenly, a pulsating crack explodes through the forest, ramming your skull like thunder. Trees quake in the blackness, battered by a huge, unseen force smashing through them. Then, amid the whine of splitting tree limbs, a surging pair of massive, barbed tentacles reaches into the clearing in search of prey.

This attack starts during the second round of the light show. Those who saved vs. spells the round before may take decisive action, followed by the confused reactions of those who failed. When the second round ends, read the following passage.

> The forest shudders again, crackling with the explosion of shattering branches. As a hail of kindling rains down on the glade, a swarm of the rippling tendrils shoots out of the darkness, ensnaring the clearing in a writhing net of flailing death and destruction.

The hidden creature is a wyndlass, a monster that resembles a monstrous, land-roving black octopus whom nature has equipped with two extra tentacles, a powerful beak, and three eyes.

As the wyndlass is a beast few have seen and fewer still have lived to describe, the PCs may be the first to discover an aspect of the creature's ecology that was previously unknown: The wyndlass's eyes glow with a faint blue light, a natural mutation that renders the beast immune to the shimmerweed's spell-like effects. However, whether this immunity is specific to shimmerweed or a general immunity against all related spells cannot be determined from this single encounter.

Wyndlass: INT low; AL N; AC 3; MV 3; HD 12; hp 88; THAC0 9; #AT 11; Dmg 1-10 (×10)/1-4; SA surprise; SZ H (22' long); ML 16; XP 5,000; MC4.

Several hours after dark, the wyndlass crawls forth from its lair and drags itself toward the clearing until it reaches location X on the map. From this point the creature can reach the clearing easily with its tentacles (each limb is nearly 30' long), and the trees block missile attacks directed at it from the clearing. The darkness and the clustered branches obscuring the wyndlass give all missiles a −3 penalty.

Although it has 10 tentacles, the beast can attack only two opponents at one time. PCs held in the grip of the wyndlass cannot defend themselves from attacks by the other tentacles. To break free, a PC must roll a successful bend bars/lift gates check. However, the razorlike barbs that cover each tentacle inflict 1-6 hp damage for each limb that the PC tears free during the escape.

Once the wyndlass has secured prey in each of its limb clusters or takes over 60 hp of damage, it immediately retreats to its lair, a maneuver that takes only one round. If the creature is heavily attacked along the way, it will drop one of its prizes in order to defend itself. If fate favors the wyndlass and the battle goes well, the predator will slay

everything in the clearing and drag it back to its lair for future consumption.

When it reaches its lair—a 16'-wide pool of quicksand about 40' deep—the wyndlass and anybody caught in its tentacles is completely submerged in a single round. PCs submerged with the wyndlass suffocate and die unless they have means of breathing underwater (see the *Player's Handbook*, page 122).

The black, oily pond is nestled behind a grove of ancient oak trees some 30' away from the clearing. When it is time to feed, the beast uses the massive trees to pull itself out of the quicksand pit. If unencumbered, the wyndlass can also use the trees to pull itself along, increasing its movement rate (MR) to 4.

Swimming in the quicksand pit is impossible. However, if a method is found to get to the bottom of the pool, the PCs can find five gems worth 500 gp (×3), 375 gp, and 100 gp; a waterproof tube containing a portrait worth 2,000 gp to a collector; and a nonmagical scepter worth 4,000 gp to its rightful owner (half that to anyone else). There are also three magical items lying on the bottom of the pool. One item can be found for every three rounds of searching:

—A *large shield +2*

—A suit of elven-sized *elven chain mail +2*

—An *arrow of sea monster slaying*

Concluding the Adventure

If the PCs survive they may find a way to turn a profit from the encounter. Wyndlass oil is an excellent lubricant and the most important ingredient in *oil of slipperiness*. If bottled, it fetches high prices from alchemists and wizards. Shimmerweed seedpods are valuable additions to any wizard's laboratory, for the crafting of magical items such as *crystal balls*. Even shimmerweed petals are highly sought after. When ground into fine sand, they are used in the creation of magical items related to light and hypnosis.

If word of their exploits gets around, the PCs may be approached by several parties interested in the location of such a rare find, including an agent dispatched by one Vlade the Deceiver. Ω

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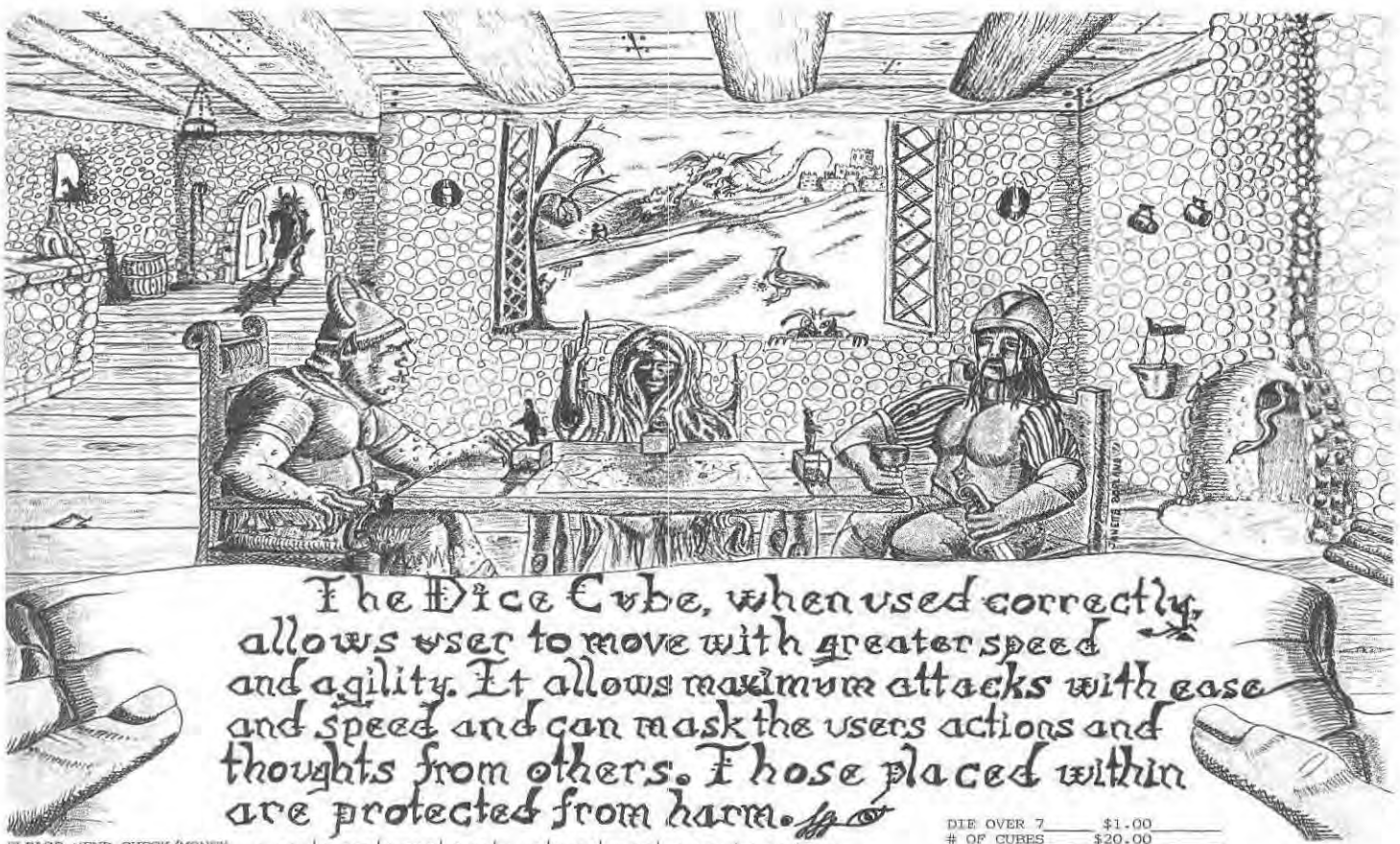
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KING OLEG'S DILEMMA

BY LEE SHEPPARD

Diplomacy is deadly work.

Artwork by Dan Frazier

Lee is a 32-year-old training officer for the Australian Customs Service. He has been role-playing since 1977 and still owns mint copies of the original D&D® rule books. This is Lee's first published adventure, and he would like to give special thanks to his wife Lucienne for her faith in him.

"King Oleg's Dilemma" is an AD&D® adventure for 4-6 player characters of levels 1-4 (about 14 total levels). A mixed party of neutral- and good-aligned PCs would work best. A PC fluent in the dwarvish language will have an advantage but is not essential. This adventure is set in the Kingdom of Borr but is easily adapted to any cold, mountainous region in the DM's own world. The fact that Borr is a far-northern region does affect the length of the days, but this can also be modified to suit the DM.

For the Player Characters

The PCs begin their adventure in the coastal town of Valar, Borr's small capital. The town itself is almost entirely composed of wooden buildings, many further insulated against the cold with outer walls of turf. The PCs probably arrive in Valar on a merchant vessel, as Borr is generally inaccessible by other means. Once the party arrives, the DM should read or paraphrase the following to the players:

> The last three weeks have been hell. Signing on to this merchant vessel with hopes of high adventure has been a terrible mistake. It has been a long, boring, and definitely unprofitable journey. To make matters worse, the days have become far longer and much colder as you sailed farther north.
>
> You have finally reached land—but what a land it is! You swear that you can see an active volcano in the hills to the east as your vessel sails into the sheltered cove that contains the town of Valar. To the north, vast icy mountains stretch as far as the eye can see. It's a land of many contradictions, yet possessing a strange beauty.
>
> As your vessel docks, townsfolk arrive to offload cargo. Eager to stretch your legs, you disembark and mingle with the local people. However, you become aware that your arrival has caused more excitement than you would have expected. A

small crowd quickly gathers around your party, and while they are obviously pleased to see you, you can't help but feel concerned when you notice a messenger hurrying away toward the town center.

It soon becomes obvious that the townsfolk believe the PCs are mercenaries. The adventurers are asked about their past exploits, who and where they have fought, and so on. The PCs may wish to overemphasize their skills for the crowd's pleasure, each new exploit being met with appropriate "oohs" and "aahs."

It is not long before the messenger returns and extends an offer of welcome from the ruler of Borr, King Oleg Steadfast. The party is invited to attend the king's court, as the king wishes to discuss a matter with them. Considering their inactivity of the past three weeks, the PCs should be eager to accept the invitation. The party is quickly led through the streets of Valar to the King's Hall, the only stone building they have so far seen.

As you enter the Hall of King Oleg of Borr, you are struck by the rugged simplicity of the furnishings. Above all else, King Oleg must be a practical man, as no pretentious war trophies or vast tapestries adorn the walls, just furs, simple banners, and the lanterns that illuminate the scene before you.

King Oleg is deep in conversation with a number of his advisors when he notices your arrival. He rises, revealing his large, muscular frame, and advances to welcome you. He does not speak as he shakes your hands, but looks you up and down as if assessing your potential. After a quick nod to his advisors, he smiles warmly and says: "Welcome lads and lasses, welcome! You look like good and true men and women. If you would share a meal with me and listen to my story, I think that you might be able to help me."

If the PCs accept the offer of a meal, King Oleg dismisses his advisors and relates his story to the party.

King Oleg began the human settlement of Borr with only a few ships filled with settlers. Although the hardships were many at first, King Oleg has begun (through sheer determination and strength of both limb and character) to provide a new life for his people. Now in his forties, King Oleg still cuts an imposing figure, the result of many earlier years of adventuring. Oleg cares for his people greatly and personally suffers with their hardships.

Although he is a strong leader, King Oleg has one weakness. He is too trusting of those around him, a mistake he may soon live to regret (and as the PCs will discover, to their own misfortune).

It has not been a good year for King Oleg. The active volcano to the east of Valar is causing some concern; the year's crops have not provided sufficient yield for export; one of his sons caught an obvious and hence highly embarrassing skin rash; and the local "deity," a cryo-hydra called Vermixafelix, apparently needs a change of diet, as he has not touched the kobold sacrifice left for him.

While these are all worrisome problems in themselves, the major concern for King Oleg is the gnoll attacks. As Borr is a young kingdom (at least as far as human habitation is concerned), it is composed principally of settlers with limited military experience. Borr is not a rich country and has not had time to build an effective army. Over the past few months, large groups of gnolls have been attacking outlying farms, and King Oleg is concerned that it will be only a matter of time before Valar itself is attacked. King Oleg's only hope is a treaty with the largest nonhuman race in Borr: the dwarves who live in the mountains to the north.

Three parties of emissaries have been sent with an offer of treaty to the dwarves. The first two groups of envoys vanished completely, and the heads of the third party were found at the town's main gate, just two weeks ago. The king is convinced that his emissaries are insufficiently experienced to undertake another mission to the dwarves. Only a well-seasoned group of individuals like the PCs probably stands a chance.

King Oleg asks the party to take the offer of treaty to the dwarves. In return for military support from the dwarves (until Borr is able to develop its own defense), King Oleg offers them the benefit of trading facilities through the use of his wharves, and a regular supply of meat, fish, and grain. In return for completing this mission, King Oleg offers the PCs 250 gp each and promises that they may keep anything they find or are given by the dwarves to seal the treaty.

As well as equipping the party against the cold, the king will provide a guide, Gunnar Petersen (see "For the Dungeon Master" for statistics), and a translator if no PC can speak dwarvish. If the PCs appear hesitant, King Oleg makes the additional offer of places of rank in Borr's army, once it is raised. If the party still doesn't seem too interested, the DM may wish to increase the incentive for the PCs by advising that it will take a number of days for their vessel to be restocked and some minor repairs made. King Oleg also guarantees that he will not allow the vessel to sail without the adventurers, if they agree to undertake the task. If the party still refuses the mission, King Oleg is disappointed but accepts the party's decision.

King Oleg Steadfast: AL CG; AC 4; MV 12; F6; hp 39; THAC0 15; #AT 1; Dmg by weapon type; S 15, D 12, C 17, I 14, W 11, Ch 15; ML 15; *chain mail +1, bastard sword +1,* throwing axe.

Long Days in Borr

The following information is optional and may be modified or ignored to suit the DM's own world.

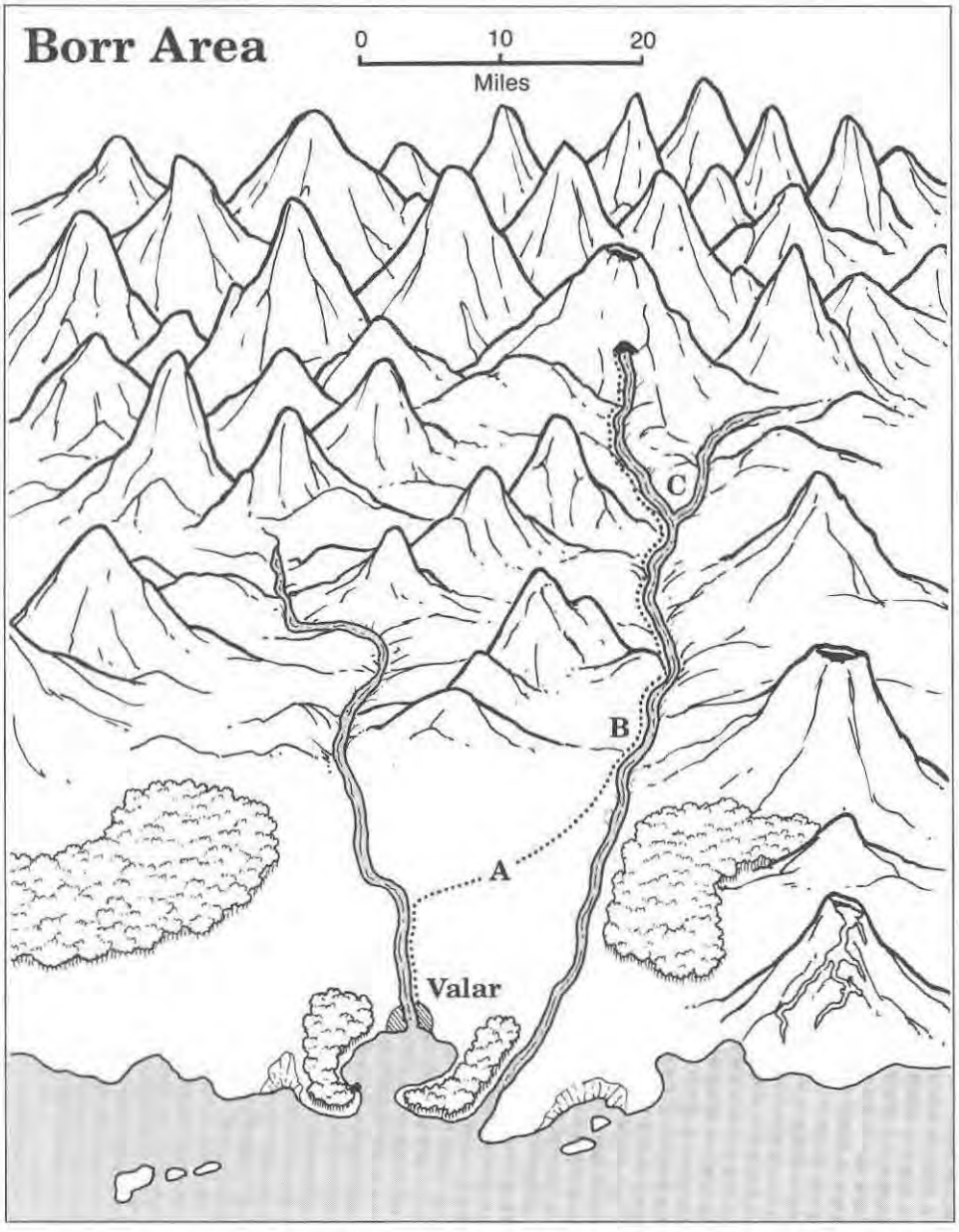
Borr is located close to this particular world's Arctic Circle, and as such, during the summer months, the days are exceptionally long, with sunlight sufficient for unhindered movement for up to 20 hours a day. One effect of this extra sunlight has been that many usually nocturnal races have had to adapt and so do not receive the normal combat penalties for operating in sunlight. Hence, the gnolls of this adventure fight equally well in darkness or full sunlight.

For the DUNGEON MASTER™

There is more to the problem of the gnolls than King Oleg suspects. One of the king's advisors, Sterna Othmassun, is in league with a weaponsmith, Bjorn Harnotha. Together, the two conspirators are making a good deal of money by providing weapons to the gnolls.

In fact, a group of only 50 gnolls is responsible for the current spate of attacks and, armed with information also provided by Sterna, they have been able to intercept two of the three previous treaty missions (for the fate of the other group of envoys, see area B).

It was Bjorn's idea to return the heads of the emissaries, partly to terrorize the



community of Valar, but mainly because he is a particularly bloodthirsty individual. Sterna and Bjorn have a lot to lose if the dwarves sign a treaty with King Oleg, and so they make plans to ensure the party's failure.

Sterna Othmassun: AL LE; AC 5; MV 6; C3; hp 14; THAC0 20; #AT 1; Dmg by spell or weapon type; S 11, D 13, C 14, I 13, W 15, Ch 11; ML 15; XP 175; scale mail, shield, mace, potion of *extra-healing, ring of warmth.*

Although greed is a motive for Sterna's disloyalty, it is not his prime motive. A cleric of the "old" world they left behind, Sterna is (wrongly) convinced that King Oleg plans to take up the worship of new gods in this new land. Sterna therefore seeks to bring down King Oleg and take his people back to their birthplace. He is glad to have Bjorn as an ally, as Bjorn is happy to do the dirty work.

Bjorn Harnotha: AL NE; AC 4; MV 9 (24); F4; hp 24; THAC0 17; #AT 1; Dmg by weapon type; S 14, D 12, C 16, I 12, W 12, Ch 9; ML 15; XP 270; chain mail, shield, *spear +1,* dagger, short bow, 12 arrows, 20 gp. Bjorn also has a pair of *snowshoes of speed* (value 500 gp) that allows him to travel at a movement rate of 24 over flat snow. He uses the snowshoes when he needs to contact his gnoll allies, thereby reducing the chances of discovery by reducing the time he is gone from Valar.

Bjorn's motives are simple: "All for one, and more for me." Bjorn doesn't enjoy working hard for his comforts and was more than eager to take an easier option. Bjorn tolerates his gnoll allies but thinks of them as expendable. If the gnolls become too successful, however, Bjorn is quite prepared to cut his losses and set up somewhere else. Even so, he will not give up his present venture without a fight. Although a good spearman himself, Bjorn prefers fighting with the advantage of greater numbers.

The Trek Begins

Assuming the party agrees to undertake the mission, they can begin their trek into the mountains. It should take the party between three and four days to reach the dwarven stronghold, traveling (on foot, as horses would not be practical) an average distance of 15 miles per day. The party may wish to travel farther each day during the extended daylight hours, but this should be discouraged, as the forced march will soon bring on the effects of fatigue (as detailed in the *Player's Handbook,* page 120). Once the party reaches the foothills (see map), movement becomes even more difficult, and the DM should ensure that the party suffers further fatigue penalties if sufficient rest periods are not taken.

King Oleg provides the party with whatever basic equipment they may require, including sleeping bags, snowshoes, and snow-tents. As he guides the party, Gunnar Petersen provides a good description of the route they will take so that, if anything happens to him, the party will be able to complete their journey. If the party does not include a dwarvish linguist (or are perhaps a bit weak in terms of numbers), an additional NPC may be included (use the statistics for Ragnar Bronstedt listed later).

Gunnar Petersen: AL LN; AC 6; MV 6; F1; hp 7; THAC0 20; #AT 1; Dmg by weapon type; S 13, D 12, C 12, I 11, W 13, Ch 12; ML 12; hide armor, battle axe, dagger, composite short bow, 12 arrows. Nonweapon proficiencies: navigation, arctic survival.

Gunnar has liven in Valar from the

beginning of its settlement and has come to love his new home. He spent much of the first year in Borr exploring the surrounding countryside and journeying into the mountains. Although he knows the location of the dwarven kingdom, he has not had any interaction with the dwarves.

Gunnar is exceptionally loyal to King Oleg and will not abandon the party under any circumstances, preferring to fight and, if necessary, to die with the party. Gunnar knows many tales and enjoys telling them over the evening fire. (This could be a good opportunity for the DM to whet the party's appetite for further adventures.)

Ragnar Bronstedt: AL LN; AC 6; MV 6; F1; hp 6; THAC0 20; #AT 1; Dmg by weapon type; S 14, D 11, C 14, I 13, W 9, Ch 11; ML 11; hide armor, spear, throwing axe (×2).

Ragnar learned to read and speak dwarvish back in the old country. A relatively somber individual, he has a cynical outlook on life. Even so, he takes great delight in dropping gnolls from a distance with his two throwing axes whenever the opportunity presents itself.

> Your party sets out early the next day. King Oleg and a fair-sized crowd of well-wishers are at the northern gate to see you off. You are sure that the next few days will be filled with adventure and danger, and your spirits are high as Gunnar, setting a good pace, leads you along the eastern side of the river that gives Valar its fresh water. You pass outlying farms as you travel the first few miles northward, but by mid-morning even these are left behind. As you walk, Gunnar tells you that the dwarven stronghold lies at the base of a volcano in the mountain range to the northeast, some three days' hard travel away.

There are three set encounters in this adventure. If the DM requires more, an arctic plain/mountain random encounter table may be used. The use of a random encounter table is not recommended, however, as the set encounters should provide sufficient challenge for the PCs without unnecessarily weakening them.

A. The First Gnoll Attack. The first encounter occurs seven to eight hours after the PCs leave Valar. Bjorn and Sterna have used a prearranged signal bonfire to summon the gnolls and have told them of the party's mission. Perhaps underestimating the strength of the party, only 10 gnolls have been sent to intercept the group.

As the PCs walk toward the northeast (see map), the gnolls rush out of a small copse of trees to the rear of the party and attack. The gnolls carry no missile weapons but are lead by a 3-HD subleader. The gnolls fight savagely until seven or more of their party are slain, whereupon the survivors attempt to flee. They will not allow themselves to be captured and will fight to the death if surrounded or trapped. If the PCs search the bodies, they can find 10 sp on each slain gnoll. The gnoll subleader also has a silver armlet worth 30 gp.

Gnoll subleader: INT low; AL CE; AC 5; MV 9; HD 3; hp 19; THAC0 17; #AT 1; Dmg 2-8; SZ L; ML 12; XP 65; scale mail, shield, battle axe; MC1.

Gnolls (9): HD 2; hp 16, 15, 14 (×3), 12 (×2), 11 (×2); THAC0 19; XP 35; scale mail, shield, long sword (4 gnolls), battle axe (3 gnolls), morningstar (2 gnolls); other statistics as for gnoll subleader above. All gnoll weapons are relatively new, well made, and rust free.

B. The Snow-Troll. Assuming the party camps for the night, they should reach the foothills by midday on the second day. Following a river valley, the party can see the particular mountain range they are attempting to reach in the distance, an additional 1-2 days' march away.

The second group of emissaries from King Oleg also reached this far but met their end at the hands of a snow-troll (see page 51) that lurks in the valley ahead. Having feasted well on the previous party of emissaries, the snow-troll looks forward to another meal. It has carved a cave into the side of the hill and covered the entrance with snow. It waits until it detects the party passing the entrance, then bursts through the snow to attack the adventurers.

A surprise roll should be made for the snow-troll's attack, with the following modifiers: Each dwarf or elf with the party should be allowed a roll to detect the concealed cave entrance when passing (1-2 on 1d8). Rangers may also roll (1-2 on 1d6). If anyone detects the concealed entrance, the party gets a +2 bonus on the surprise roll when the snow-troll attacks, but if the cave entrance is not detected, the party suffers a −3 penalty to the surprise roll.

If the party defeats the snow-troll and examines the cave, they will find gruesome evidence of the emissaries' horrible fate. Among the remains, in a corner of the cave, the party can find 15 gp and an old torn backpack that contains two potions (*healing, clairaudience*). The search will also reveal some small personal items that belonged to the emissaries, and the PCs should be encouraged to return these effects to the families of the slain envoys.

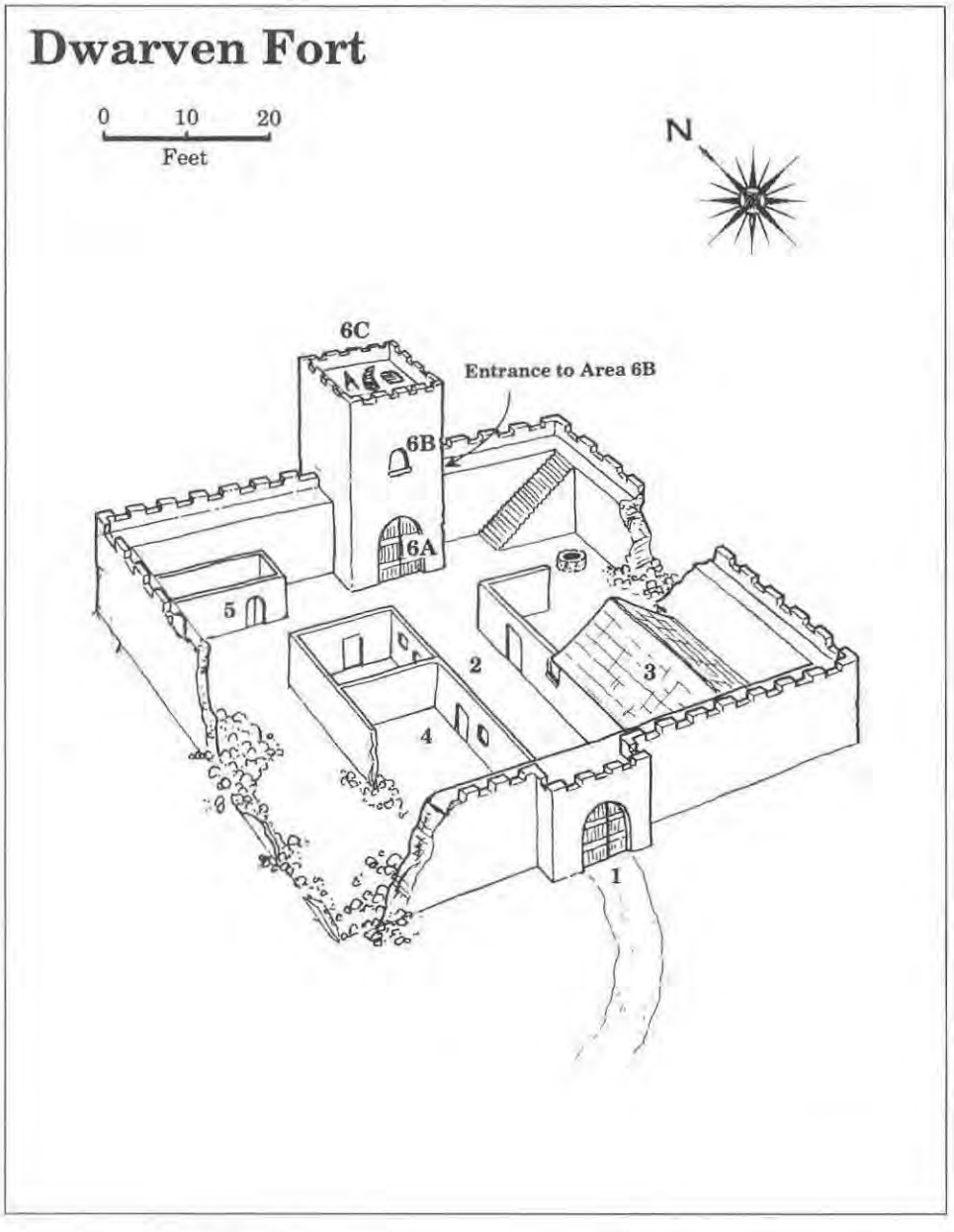
C. Deserted Fort. Depending on the party's speed, the PCs should be well into the mountains by the third or fourth day. The volcano that houses the entrance to the dwarven kingdom (the dwarves use the volcano to power their forges) dominates the river valley, coming into view and disappearing again as the trail weaves in and around rocky outcrops.

As the PCs emerge from behind one large outcrop and find themselves with a clear view of the valley below, they are alerted by a yell. If the PCs investigate the source of the yell, they notice a sizeable force of gnolls moving quickly up the mountain path behind and below them. The gnolls have spotted the party and are increasing their pace to catch up.

The failure of the first gnoll attack has been discovered (either by an escapee from the earlier battle or the failure of the attacking party to return). Infuriated by the survival of the meddling outsiders, Bjorn Harnotha contacted the main force of gnolls and is personally leading the group in pursuit of the PCs. The gnolls are used to the conditions in these mountains and will catch up to the party within two hours.

If Gunnar Petersen is still with the group, he will be well aware of how little time remains before they are overrun. He mentions to the group that he knows of a ruined dwarven fort just a short distance farther on. Although not perfect, it will at least provide the party with a tactical advantage. If Gunnar was killed in an earlier encounter, the DM can suggest that a better defensible position may be found farther on, and allow the party to notice the ruins in the near distance.

In either case, once the PCs reach the dwarven fort, they have one hour to prepare before the gnolls arrive. The



party may wish to slow the gnolls' pursuit by creating an avalanche or setting some other form of trap. As there are a number of options the PCs may suggest, it is left to the DM to handle the particulars of each suggestion. However, the DM should remember that the one thing the party does not have is time, and the PCs should be warned that they will quickly be overrun if they attempt traps that require lengthy preparation. Any successful trap will delay the gnolls by a maximum of one hour. No trap, no matter how successful, should be allowed to decimate the gnoll force.

The PCs may choose to ignore the strategic advantage of the fort and attempt to outrun the gnolls, especially if Gunnar is not with them to advise against such a move. If this is the case, the party will be overtaken by the gnolls one hour after passing the fort. To improve the party's chances of survival, the DM may wish to allow the party's traps to be more successful (should they plan any) or arrange for a dwarven patrol (see page 50) to even out the numbers.

The Dwarven Fort

The dwarven fort is located just above the junction of two small rivers that combine to form the river that the party has been following. Originally designed to overlook the river valley, the fort was built many years ago during an earlier conflict between the dwarves and the gnolls and has been deserted (but not forgotten) for some time.

1. Entrance and Outer Wall. The fort is square, with an entrance in the south wall and a tower in the center of the north wall. The walls enclose three buildings and a central courtyard. As these buildings were built by and for dwarves, the doorways are only 5½' high, and tall PCs will have to stoop to enter the buildings. This helps to explain why the gnolls have not remained to occupy this fort, as the constant headaches were too much for the slow witted creatures.

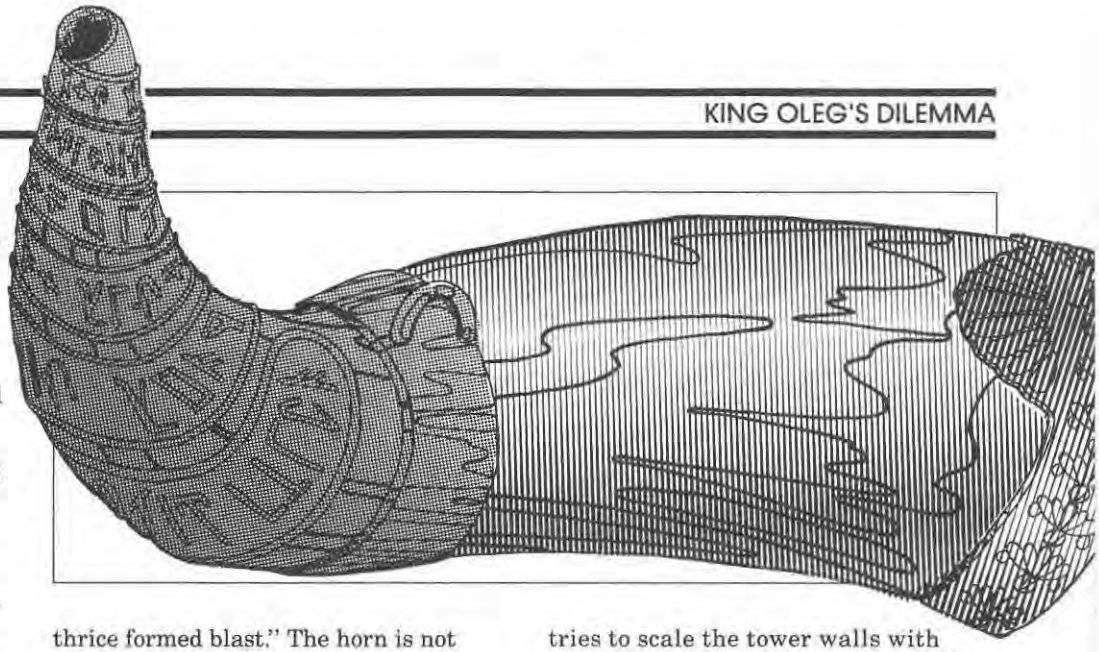
The double doors that seal the main entrance long ago outlived their usefulness, as two large sections of the main walls have been reduced to ruin (see map). The walls that remain standing are well made, though, and stand 20' tall. The battlements atop the walls are 3' high, and the parapet is 5' wide. All of the walls and floors within the fort are made of stone.

2. Main Courtyard. This open area leads from the main entrance (area 1) to the ground floor of the tower (area 6). In the northeast corner, a well supplied the dwarven troops stationed here. The water is still drinkable, but there is no bucket with which to draw it up from the well.

3. Barracks. These were originally the barracks of the dwarven troops, but they have long since been looted of any useful items. This is the only building that has any of its original clay tile roof remaining.

4. Storerooms. Designed to hold the supplies required by the dwarves stationed here, these rooms are now empty. The southernmost section appears to have once doubled as a smithy, as iron filings and some blackened bricks are found on the floor.

5. Wash-house. This building served as a combination wash-house and privy. It is now completely empty.



6A. Tower, Ground Floor. Large double doors open to reveal a stable and storeroom. The dwarves themselves did not ride horses, but on occasions used animals to cart supplies. The stable is big enough for only two animals. Some shelving still remains, and if the party searches the room, they can find a small cask of lamp oil that has been overlooked by previous looters. There is enough oil to fill four flasks or to spread over a 10′ × 10′ area.

There is no access to the second floor from this level.

6B. Tower, Second Floor. This tower room has only one door, which opens onto the parapet to the east. The door is locked, but it can be opened by a thief who makes a successful lock-picking roll. The door is a sturdy one, and it will take nothing short of a battering ram to force it open. The party should be discouraged from taking this action, as the tower appears to be the most easily defensible part of the fort. A party member who climbs onto the tower roof can enter this room through a trapdoor, then open the parapet door for the others, as a key is not required to get out.

Inside the room are two beds, a small dresser, a table with two stools and a small wood-burning stove in the corner. A ladder leads upward to the tower roof, and a small lockable window faces the courtyard below. The door can be locked and barred from the inside, and as previously mentioned, will resist being forced for quite some time (see "Gnoll Attack" for specific details). There is nothing of value to be found in this room.

6C. Tower Roof. Forty feet above the ground, the tower roof gives an excellent view of the entire fort. A trapdoor swings open easily, disclosing a ladder that leads downward. A small hole in the northwest corner serves to vent the stove in the room below. The remains of a wooden frame and a large metal horn are scattered about the southwest corner of the roof.

The horn is approximately 6′ long, with an 18″ opening. It was once suspended in the wooden frame, but the ropes have rotted away. The horn is decorated, and there are dwarvish runes near the mouth. If Ragnar is present or a *read languages* spell is cast, the runes translate as "For fear of stranger, in iron am I cast, to warn of danger, with thrice formed blast." The horn is not magical.

Even without the aid of a translation, a clever group of PCs should be able to guess the purpose of the horn. During the dwarf/gnoll war, the horn was used to alert the main dwarven stronghold of impending attack. If the party translates the runic inscription and blows the horn three times, a unit of dwarves from the volcano stronghold immediately begin a forced march to the fort, arriving three hours after the horn is blown. If the PCs merely guess, and don't blow the horn exactly three times, the dwarves will still investigate, but they will take 6-12 hours to arrive. If the PCs don't discover the significance of the horn, they're on their own.

Gnoll Attack

The tactics employed by Bjorn Harnotha and the gnolls will depend on the number of times the horn is blown. The gnolls are well aware of the significance of three blasts, and realizing the short time available, they will make an immediate all-out attack. There are 25 gnolls with Bjorn, including Klegg (a 4-HD leader) and two 3-HD subleaders. They will split into two groups, with one subleader and 10 gnolls attacking through the east wall, and the rest entering through the southwest gap.

Klegg is a young but extremely strong leader. He has respect for Bjorn, due to their similarly vicious nature. He realizes the importance of defeating the humans' attempts at treaty with the dwarves and will fight until he or the PCs are killed.

If the adventurers have set up their defense in the tower, the gnolls attacking from the east attempt to break down the doors, while the main force tries to scale the tower walls with grapples. In this scenario, the gnolls will not take the time to construct a battering ram, and because it is likely that the parapet door will resist all normal attempts at opening, the main threat will be from the gnolls trying to reach the tower roof.

Three gnolls with the main group have short bows, and they will position themselves in the southernmost section of area 4. Bjorn has everything to lose if the PCs are not killed and will fight to the death. The gnolls will continue to fight as long as Bjorn and Klegg are alive to lead them, but if Bjorn and Klegg are killed, the DM should make a morale check, taking into account how many more of the gnolls have also been slain. If the gnolls fail their morale check, they make their escape before the dwarves arrive. If the gnolls' morale is good, they continue to fight until defeated.

If the PCs do not sound the horn, or if they sound the wrong number of blasts, Bjorn can afford to be more restrained. He first calls on the party to surrender, although he has no intention of honoring such an offer. If the party is sensible and refuses, Bjorn next deploys his forces as described in the attack above, but more cautiously.

The gnolls who enter through the east wall take four turns to make a crude battering ram from the barracks roof timbers. Once the ram is completed, they attack the parapet door to the tower while their companions cover them with missile fire. If this group is successful in breaking down the door (this will take 10 combat rounds, even with a battering ram), the main force will also rush the door. If the attempt on the door fails, the remaining gnolls and Bjorn attack the tower with grapples.

The DM should remember that this time, Bjorn and the gnolls are able to make a number of attacks rather than one all-out effort. Regardless of the number of attacks, the morale conditions mentioned previously should also be applied in this situation.

Klegg (gnoll leader): INT low; AL CE; AC 3; MV 9; HD 4; hp 27; THAC0 17; #AT 1; Dmg 2-8; SZ L; ML 14; XP 120; banded mail, shield, morningstar, 5 gp and a silver armlet (value 25 gp); MC1.

Gnoll subleaders (2): AC 5; HD 3; hp 20, 19; ML 12; XP 65; scale mail, shield, battle axe, long sword; other statistics as for Klegg, above. Each subleader has 25 sp and wears a pair of silver bracers (value 10 gp).

Gnolls (22): AC 5; HD 2; hp 16 (×5), 14 (×4), 12 (×4), 11 (×3), 10 (×3), 9 (×3); ML 11; XP 35; scale mail, shield, sword (8 gnolls), battle axe (6 gnolls), guisarme (3 gnolls), morningstar (2 gnolls), short bow (3 gnolls), 10 sp each; other statistics as for Klegg, above.

Regardless of how many times the party blows the horn, the battle should be over before the dwarves arrive. The significance of the horn blasts is that, if the party makes the right signal, Bjorn will have to throw caution to the winds and make one savage attack. If the PCs are sensible and plan their defenses carefully, they should have a very good chance of surviving. If the party appears to be in great difficulty, the DM may want to remind the PCs of the significance of the gnoll leaders, and the effect they have on morale, or arrange to have a small dwarven patrol (maximum of five fighters) nearby when the horn is sounded. Use the following statistics for the dwarven patrol, whenever it arrives.

Dulanin Sternhelm (dwarven patrol leader): AL LG; AC 4; MV 6; F4; hp 23; THAC0 17; #AT 1; Dmg by weapon type; S 15, D 13, C 15, I 10, W 10, Ch 15; ML 14; *battle axe +2, chain mail +1,* short sword, snowshoes, three potions of *healing.*

Dulanin is a seasoned fighter with an intense hatred for gnolls and their kind. He will be particularly pleased with any party that is successful against the gnolls and will be eager to help in any way.

Dwarves (4): F3 (×1), F2 (×3); hp 19, 14, 12 (×2); THAC0 18 (×1), 19 (×3); ML 13; chain mail, shield, dagger, military pick (1 dwarf), battle axe (3 dwarves), snowshoes; other statistics as for Dulanin Sternhelm, above.

Concluding the Adventure

If the party survives the final encounter with the gnolls, completing the mission should be a simple task. If the PCs blew the horn, dwarven troops will eventually arrive at the fort. If the PCs managed without the extra assistance of the dwarven patrol mentioned above, the DM may use those statistics, with the addition of five 1st-level dwarven fighters, to represent the dwarven force sent out from the main stronghold. These dwarves will provide assistance to the PCs, healing wounds if required. If the party includes a dwarf, or if Ragnar is still alive, the PCs can communicate King Oleg's offer of treaty.

If the PCs did not blow the horn, they will have to continue their journey and reach the dwarven stronghold before making contact with the dwarves. Although this will take the party another six hours' travel time, the DM should allow the party to accomplish this without further incident.

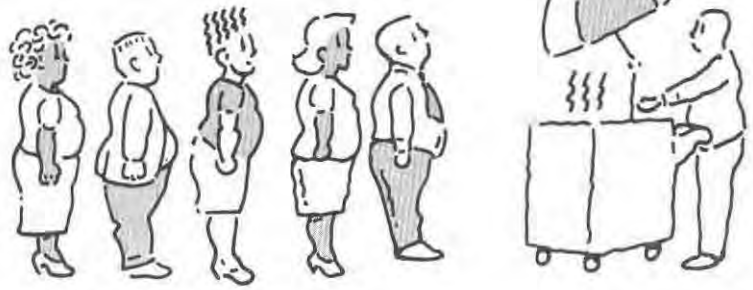
In either case, the dwarves are happy to accept King Oleg's offer as, like most dwarves, they are not too fond of sea-travel and welcome the opportunity to increase their trading horizons. The dwarves have not attempted to contact the human settlers previously, as they have been unsure of the settlers' true nature. They are therefore pleasantly surprised and pleased with King Oleg's peaceful intentions and will prove to be valuable allies. If no party member speaks dwarvish, the DM can have a lot of fun watching the party attempt to communicate King Oleg's wishes.

For successfully contacting the dwarves, each party member should be awarded 500 XP, on top of any experience points awarded for individual combats. The DM should also reward individual PCs (up to 200 XP additional) for good ideas during the course of the adventure.

To seal the treaty with King Oleg, each member of the party is given one weapon of his choice by the dwarves. The weapons are not magical but are exceptionally well made and would be worth 100 gp each in any market. The party members should not wish to part with the weapons, though, as they are marked with dwarvish runes that identify the holder as a "Dwarf Friend," ensuring a friendly response from any dwarves encountered.

Once the dwarves are contacted and King Oleg's offer is accepted, this adventure is over. Later adventures could require the PCs to further convince the dwarves of their honesty and bravery (especially if they had trouble translating King Oleg's treaty terms), or help the dwarven troops remove the threat of the gnolls once and for all. It is also highly likely that Sterna Othmassun's role in the plot will remain undiscovered, and he will have revenge on his mind. There are many more secrets within the Kingdom of Borr, but these will have to wait for another time. Ω

IT'S NOT WORTH THE WEIGHT.



For better health and fitness, exercise.

American Heart Association

Snow-Troll

CLIMATE/TERRAIN:	Any arctic or subarctic land
FREQUENCY:	Rare
ORGANIZATION:	Solitary/Pair
ACTIVITY CYCLE:	Night
DIET:	Carnivore
INTELLIGENCE:	Low (5-7)
ALIGNMENT:	Chaotic evil
NO. APPEARING:	1-2
ARMOR CLASS:	4
MOVEMENT:	9
HIT DICE:	7
THAC0:	13
NO. OF ATTACKS:	2
DAMAGE/ATTACK:	1d8+2/1d8+2
SPECIAL ATTACKS:	See below
SPECIAL DEFENSES:	Regeneration, resist cold
MAGIC RESISTANCE:	Nil
SIZE:	L (8')
MORALE:	Elite (14)
XP VALUE:	1,400

Slightly smaller and broader than its fearsome cousin, the snow-troll is still a frightening sight. Although closely resembling the common troll, the snow-troll's skin is much paler, and large parts of its body are covered with white fur. The snow-troll's broad, furred feet allow it to move quickly over snow and rock, and its strong claws and arms mean that it can climb as well as any troll. Some snow trolls speak a few words of Common, but most only know their own high-pitched, singsong tongue. The snow-troll language has twenty words for "prey."

Combat: Unlike the common troll, the snow-troll attacks with its two clawed hands only. Like the troll, the snow-troll can engage two opponents at once. As well as possessing the ability to regenerate (3 hp per round, starting three rounds after first being wounded), the snow-troll is also extremely resistant to cold and cold-based attacks. If a saving throw is made, the snow-troll suffers no effects from any cold-based attack forms (half damage if the saving throw is failed). Conversely, the snow-troll is particularly vulnerable to fire and suffers double damage from any fire-based attacks (normal damage if saving throw is made).

The snow-troll is a formidable opponent who will fight to the death at all times. The snow-troll is fearless enough to attack small villages single handed, but its preferred method of attack is to occupy a cave or similar dwelling along a traveled route, covering the entrance with snow or rock. The snow-troll becomes intimately acquainted with the area around its home and is able to detect its prey in a number of ways. It can pick up minute changes in the surface tension of the snow surrounding its lair, it can detect sound vibrations caused by movement over rock or sand, or it can use (like all trolls) its acute sense of smell to sniff out its prey. The snow-troll waits until it detects movement outside its lair, whereupon it bursts forth, surprising its victims with the unexpected and ferocious nature of its attacks. A snow troll has a 6 in 10 chance of surprising prey, and is itself only surprised on a 1 in 10 in its home territory.

Habitat/Society: The snow-troll is a solitary creature, leaving its territory only once every three years, during the mating season. Each third year, dozens or even hundreds of snow trolls gather in the midwinter darkness to mate, in dark mountain valleys unknown to other creatures. The males abandon their mates shortly thereafter, leaving them to raise their young alone come spring. Pairs are always a mother troll and her offspring.

A snow-troll's clawed hands help it climb glaciers, snowy mountains, and treacherous ice floes. A female snow-troll seeks solitude in high places or on icebergs when she is about to bear young; this territory gives her the same surprise bonuses as her home territory. Young snow-trolls grow to full maturity within a year; the young snow-trolls are reputed to be the most dangerous, because they eat twice as much as other snow-trolls.

Adapted well to the harsh conditions it prefers, the snow-troll can live 120 years. The snow-troll will not work with other races, as it finds all humans and nonhumans equally tasty.

Ecology: The snow-troll is a rapacious predator, able to pursue prey over difficult terrain and, unlike its temperate cousins, patient enough to wait for hours for prey to wander into striking range. It establishes and maintains a territory covering hundreds of square miles, and will fight and kill polar bears, humans, and other competitors for food. White dragons are their only natural predators. Snow-trolls and ice trolls are natural rivals and will fight endlessly over territory.

INTO THE SILVER REALM

BY STEVE KURTZ

Slaying the dragon is only the beginning.

Artwork by David O. Miller

Yes, Steve Kurtz is still *at Cornell, completing his graduate research in orthopaedic biomechanics. His most recent projects for the* AL-QADIM™ *world include* City of Delights *and* Ruined Kingdoms.

"Into the Silver Realm" was inspired by OP1 Tales of the Outer Planes *and "Fedifensor" (DRAGON® magazine issue #67), both of which featured githyanki strongholds in the Outer Planes but downplayed or completely ignored the pivotal role of psionics in githyanki strategy and combat. It is dedicated to Bill Brandt, whose cocky psionicist underwent a severe attitude adjustment by the end of the adventure.*

"Into the Silver Realm" is an AD&D® adventure designed for 4-8 neutral and good player characters of 8th-12th level (about 60 total levels). A mage or priest familiar with modes of Astral travel would be helpful, as would a ranger or warrior with tracking nonweapon proficiency. In addition, having a psionicist in the party will prove invaluable because of the large number of psionic creatures encountered in this adventure. The adventure requires experienced players and cooperating PCs.

This module involves heavy use of psionics. The DM will need access to the *Complete Psionics Handbook* (*CPH*) in order to run this adventure successfully. New spells and magical items detailed in the *Tome of Magic* (*ToM*) are denoted by an asterisk (*); if the DM does not have access to this resource, another spell selection or item can easily be substituted. The *Outer Planes Appendix* to the *Monstrous Compendium* (MC8) and the *Manual of the Planes* (*MotP*) would be useful, but the adventure can be run without them.

The first part of this module is set in the Forgotten Realms but can easily be incorporated into an ongoing campaign by changing a few place names. The adventure begins when the PCs arrive at any large city in the northern Realms.

Starting the Adventure

At some place where the party is all together (the marketplace, an outfitter's shop, an inn), the PCs are approached by a young man bearing a message (see page 53). The boy says only, "My lords and ladies, I have a message for you from my liege, Countess Nemours." While the PCs are reading the letter,

the page presents them with a small wrapped bundle containing a flawless fire opal (worth 2,500 gp).

If the PCs look into the matter more closely, they can discover that the page is in the service of a local aristocrat named Toinlé Nemours, who received the letter and bundle in a package several days ago from his cousin in Mirabar, with directions to deliver it to the PC party. At his cousin's request, he sent one of his pages searching for the PCs to deliver the message. Nothing more can be learned of the matter at the PCs' current location.

If the party accepts the countess's invitation and travels to Mirabar, the journey north is quick and relatively uneventful (see the map of the Northlands). A powerful party could save considerable travel time with flying mounts or with *teleport* spells. If so, the countess is pleased to see the PCs arrive early and adjusts her timetables accordingly.

Once the PCs arrive at Heather's Bend, a luxurious inn, a messenger conveys the news of their arrival to the countess and a meeting is scheduled within two hours. When the PCs have prepared themselves to meet their noble patron, read or paraphrase the following to the players:

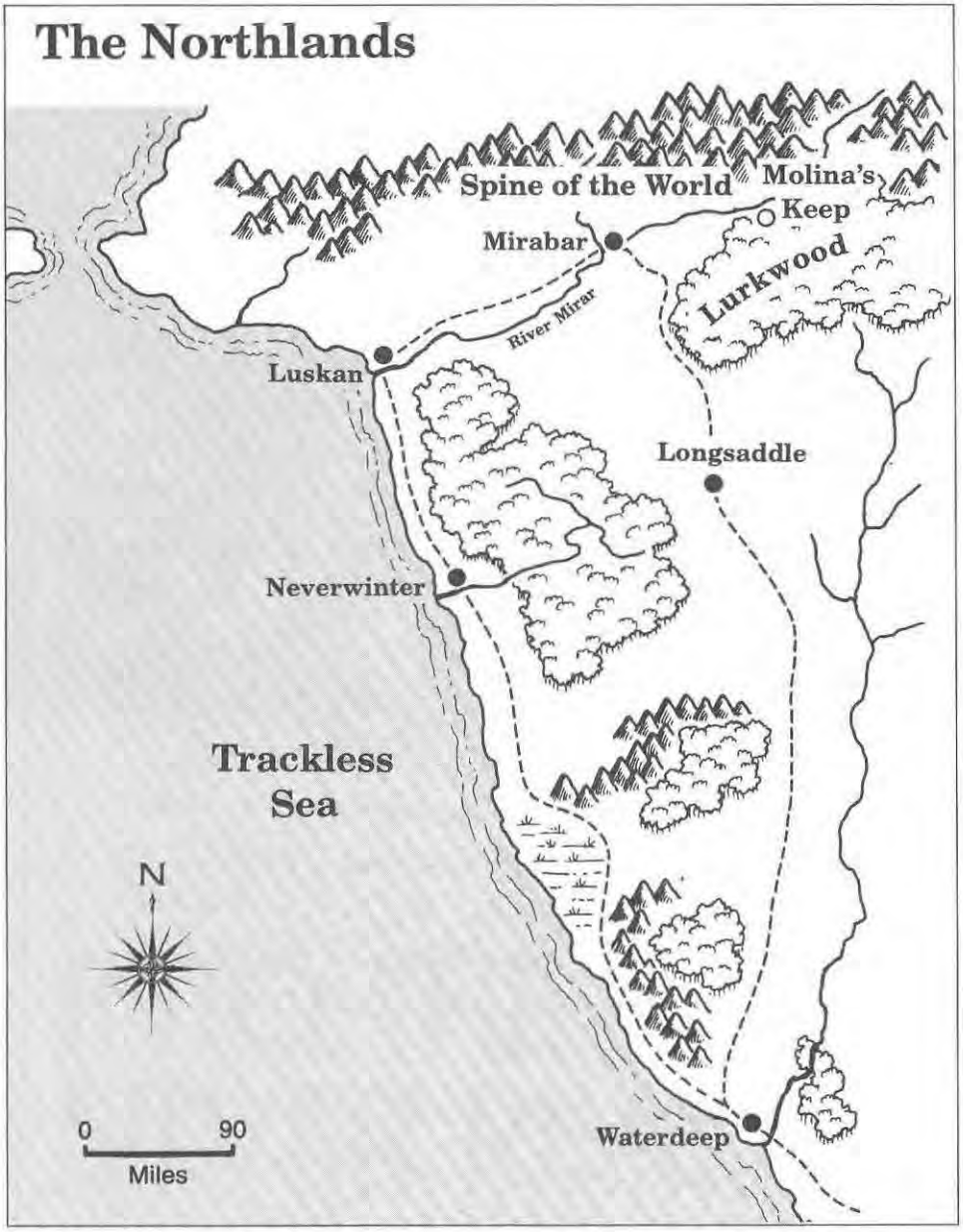
> The countess is far smaller than you pictured her: a fragile, small-boned woman nearly lost in a marvelous gray dress that seems to envelop her in a cloud of silk. Her face is plain, set with hard, crisp lines betraying middle age. As she sees you, her firm mouth curves into a gracious smile.
>
> "Welcome to Mirabar!" She greets you warmly, not like an ostentatious aristocrat addressing her servants but as though you were her social peers. "Let us retire to a more secluded room so we can discuss the matter at hand with more privacy. You must be hungry after your long journey."
>
> You are quickly guided into one of the tavern's private dining rooms, where a magnificent feast has been prepared. Roast pheasant, venison, and quail are arrayed on the table in golden platters. After the wine has been poured, the servants discreetly vanish, leaving you and the countess alone. The meal passes quickly, with the countess wanting to hear news of your latest exploits. Before long, she

My lords and ladies, I have dire need of your help and would like to offer you a very lucrative proposal in exchange for your assistance involving a certain red dragon named Storm. News of your courageous exploits, as well as your discretion, has travelled far — even as far north as my residence in Mirabar. Please come and visit as my guests, so we can discuss this matter fully.

I have reserved rooms for you at the Heather's Bend in Mirabar two weeks from now. Please do not breathe news of Storm to anyone, as I would not have Mirabar crawling with incompetent dragon hunters, who would get in the way of professionals such as yourselves.

I look forward to our meeting in fourteen days. The page has a small package that should compensate you for your travel time and expenses —

Bonifer 93



begs you address her by her first name, Arelisa, and at last begins to speak of the reason for your visit. She speaks slowly, choosing her words carefully and studying your reactions intently.

"As you know, I called you to help with a red dragon known as Storm, who until recently had confined her devastation to the wild lands north of Lurkwood. Five months ago, Storm began raiding the outlying districts and farms of Mirabar, and two months later she completely devastated the small keep belonging to Molina, a powerful if reclusive wizard. After Molina's death, the dragon's raids became increasingly bold, and soon several of my own villages were left burning in the creature's wake.

"It was then that I realized that we needed professional help, a seasoned adventuring company accustomed to facing such perils. Now I am a wizard of no small talents, although my power is minuscule when compared with that wielded by Molina. After the dragon raided one of my villages, I assumed the form of an owl and followed Storm back to her lair.

"I can give you directions that will take you directly to the dragon's doorstep. All I ask is that you slay Storm. The dragon's hoard, which must be truly gigantic after plundering Molina's stronghold, is yours to keep should you succeed, though I would like access to Molina's spell books, if you recover them.

"Finally, I must ask you to depart immediately. News of the dragon is spreading rapidly, and before long Mirabar will be crawling with other dragon hunters. Will you accept my quest?"

The party will be given little time to make up their minds, but the opportunity to plunder a dragon hoard should be an enticement that few adventurers would care to pass up (especially considering that the dragon's lair has already been located for them). If the PCs accept, Arelisa smiles and thanks them warmly before describing the location of the dragon's lair.

"If you follow the River Mirar upstream about 90 miles, you will come to the ruins of Molina's keep. Head due east to the northern border of Lurkwood and follow it east toward the southern reaches of the Spine of the World. There, at the mouth of the Valley of Khedron, lies a volcano named Cinderspire. The mountain earned its name after its last eruption over a thousand years ago but has belched only steam ever since. You will find Storm's lair halfway up Cinderspire's southeastern slope."

Arelisa helps the PCs prepare for their adventure, telling them the locations of the best smiths, armorers, and alchemists in town. She can advance them 1,000 gp for mounts, pack animals, equipment, and retainers (such as guards for the treasure caravan). Unless the party is weak, she does not provide them with any magical items. She can give a weak party two of each of the following potions: *invulnerability, extra-healing,* and *heroism.*

Having seen the dragon, Arelisa can report its size at roughly 150′ from snout to tail, but she is uncertain about

its age. She doubts the dragon could be much older than a mature adult. She claims that she knows nothing else about the dragon or its lair. She tells the PCs that Molina's home was an ordinary shell keep (an outer stone wall with inner woodwork and masonry around a small inner courtyard). She urges the party to depart as quickly as possible, preferably the next morning.

For the DUNGEON MASTER™

Although this might appear to be just another dragon-slaying mission to the PCs (and the DM should do everything possible to foster this image), Arelisa's real motives go far beyond the mere chopping up of a single dragon.

The story begins over 60 years ago with the wizard Molina, a powerful sorceress who experimented with travel to other realities and planes of existence. In one of her adventures in the Astral plane, she and her compatriots discovered a small githyanki outpost and, catching it completely by surprise, destroyed it. In the plunder, they discovered a magical sword of fantastic power: a githyanki special *silver sword* (with vorpal capabilities) named Diamond-edge.

After returning to the Realms, Molina settled down and married Kengrin, one of her adventuring companions. Kengrin kept the githyanki blade and trusted in the power of his sword arm and his wife's magic to keep them safe if any of the Astral warriors ever came to reclaim it.

Because the githyanki live in the Astral plane, where subjective time is hardly felt at all, many years passed in the Realms before a detachment from the Mindspear Battalion arrived in the northern Realms, charged with tracking down the sword and punishing those who hold it. In magical disguise, the party of powerful githyanki scoured the Northlands for the blade. Their journey soon ended at Molina's keep. During their travels, however, the githyanki took careful notice of this plane's inhabitants and observed that the northern Realms would be a perfect training ground for their battalion's soldiers.

The githyanki are as patient as elves. They quietly established a lair in Cinderspire, not far from the location of their precious sword. The process of establishing a secure githyanki lair requires at least one red dragon, but not just any dragon will do. Only a few members of the species have the mental faculties to become imprinted by the githyanki, and the process is complicated by the fact that imprinting can take place only at the dragon's birth.

From the eggs of Apocalypse, an imprinted dragon in the Astral plane, the githyanki in Cinderspire raised Storm to young adulthood before extracting their revenge (out of caution more than anything else; Molina and Kengrin were quite powerful and would not be easy to catch off-guard). A few weeks ago, the githyanki urged Storm to assault the village near Molina's stronghold. While the red dragon attacked, the githyanki used the distraction to sneak inside Molina's keep.

Catching Molina and her husband completely by surprise, the githyanki swiftly claimed their revenge, slaying Kengrin and incapacitating Molina with a *feeblemind* spell, nearly 60 years after the original theft of Diamond-edge (to the githyanki, this is relatively swift retribution). Although believed to be dead, Molina is now held prisoner by the githyanki in the Astral plane, kept alive in her *feebleminded* condition until her knowledge of extra-planar travel can be recorded in the githyanki's archives.

Among the treasures that the githyanki discovered in Molina's keep (in addition to Diamond-edge) was a magical book entitled *Peregrin's Treatise on Fixed Portals* (see the sidebar on page 66). This book describes how to establish a permanent *gate* between the Astral plane and other realities.

Experimenting with information in the *Treatise*, the githyanki were able to successfully establish a fixed portal between the battalion headquarters (in the Astral plane) and Cinderspire. They became confident that a similar *gate* could be opened to a much more important location—Limbo, the home of the githyanki's eternal enemies, the githzerai.

Then a githzerai named Arelisa entered the picture. Several months ago, a war band of githzerai captured a githyanki party in the Astral plane and learned of the Mindspear Battalion's plans to extend their power into the unprepared Northlands of the Realms. The githzerai dispatched Arelisa to learn as much as possible about the githyanki plans and eliminate their base, if possible. In the past few months, she has managed to locate and infiltrate Northlands society, posing as Countess Nemours (the real countess is on an extended "vacation" in Limbo until the githzerai's plans are complete).

In addition to the powers of a 9th-level wizard, Arelisa has the skills of a 12th-level thief and is an expert at voice mimicry, disguise, and forgery (among her other attributes). Arelisa also has the mental powers of a 12th-level psionicist. She is currently *polymorphed* into human form and using a disguise to make her look like Countess Nemours.

Arelisa, *polymorphed* githzerai: INT genius; AL CN; AC −1; MV 12 (96 in Limbo); M9/T12; hp 50; THAC0 15; #AT 1; Dmg by spell or weapon type; SA quadruple damage backstab, psionics; SD *plane shift* (at will); MR 50%; SZ M; ML 10; MC8; S 14, D 18, C 15, I 18, W 14, Ch 17; PP 60%, OL 80%, RT 80%, MS 95%, HS 95%, DN 95%, CW 60%, RL 70%; *bracers of defense AC 3.*

Spells: *change self, comprehend languages, detect magic, magic missile; alter self, mirror image, Tasha's uncontrollable hideous laughter; dispel magic, lightning bolt, nondetection; improved invisibility, polymorph self; cone of cold.*

Psionics: PS = Int (18); telepathy (primary), psychometabolism, psychokinesis, psychoportation; PSPs 200; powers: Awe, Cell Adjustment, Contact, Day Dream, Dimension Door, Ectoplasmic Form, Ejection, Ego Whip, Energy Containment, ESP, Id Insinuation, Intellect Fortress, Invisibility, Invincible Foes, Levitation, Life Detection, Mental Barrier, Mind Bar, Mind Blank, Mindlink, Mind Over Body, Mind Thrust, Mind Over Body, Molecular Manipulation, Probe, Psionic Crush, Psionic Blast, Teleport, Teleport Trigger, Time Shift, Thought Shield, Tower of Iron Will.

Arelisa wields Striker, a *long sword of dancing*. She stores Striker and all of her traveling spell books (which include all the spells she has memorized plus *read magic, identify, magic mirror,* and *seeming*), plus a vast array of disguises and costumes, in the largest type *bag of holding*. She also keeps 12 potions of *extra-healing,* two of *invulnerability,* two of *heroism,* a *crystal ball* with *telepathy,* a *wand of lightning* (36 charges remaining), and three scrolls in her *bag*. The first scroll contains *raise dead, regeneration,* and *blade barrier* spells, cast at 19th level (25% chance of failure). The second and third are wizard scrolls containing *seeming, improved invisibility, nondetection, spectral force,* and *cone of cold* spells (cast at 9th level), and *reincarnation* and

stone to flesh spells cast at 12th level (15% chance of failure).

Arelisa is among the most powerful of githzerai, an elite spy sent to infiltrate Prime Material planes when utmost secrecy is paramount (she always cloaks her alignment and identity using a *nondetection* spell). Arelisa is not one to fight when outnumbered; she will use her psionic Teleport to escape and later return for retribution when her enemies least expect it.

Arelisa should be played with the utmost finesse, tact, and charismatic graciousness. She is close mouthed to the extreme, telling the PCs only what they need to know. She will neither admit being a githzerai nor will she ever confirm it should the PCs correctly guess her identity later in the adventure.

On one of her forays into the Spine of the World, Arelisa located the githyanki lair in Cinderspire. By magically cloaking her thoughts and *polymorphing* into insect form, Arelisa infiltrated the lair and was dismayed to find the red dragon Storm, for that was a clear sign that the githyanki had already established a permanent base in the Realms.

Posing as a local noble, she heard of the party's deadly reputation and hopes they can destroy this githyanki lair for her; the githzerai forces, normally reluctant even to leave Limbo, are currently busy battling the githyanki on countless other realities. Arelisa was all the githzerai war chiefs could spare, but she is confident that, with her assistance, the PCs can rid both the Realms and the githzerai of a dangerous enemy. If the party fails or is slaughtered by the githyanki, too bad; at least they will take some githyanki with them. Besides, she can always recruit more dragon hunters. Dozens of them will soon be arriving in Mirabar.

Githyanki and Strategies

The statistics and strategies for the majority of githyanki detailed in this adventure are discussed in this section. This is the most difficult—and most important—part of the entire adventure. These hints and suggestions show how to make even a low-level party githyanki a dangerous menace for highly experienced PCs. The DM is urged to read (and reread) this section thoroughly with a copy of the *CPH* close at hand, so that combat situations can be resolved quickly and smoothly.

All githyanki in this adventure have the following statistics unless stated otherwise:

Githyanki: INT exceptional; AL LE; MV 12 (96 in Astral Plane); SA psionics; SD *plane shift* at will; SZ M; ML 14; MC8.

Warriors

The bulk of the githyanki Astral army is comprised of trained 3rd-level fighters, most of whom (75%) are specialized with the githyanki weapon of choice, the two-handed sword. These warriors are typically outfitted in banded mail. As symbols of their rank and as rewards for military service, warriors also have 1-4 garnets (100 gp each) mounted on silver pins woven into their braided hair. Each warrior also wears a carved silver circlet (50 gp) and a carved silver armband (100 gp).

For even the lowliest warrior, these jewels are marks of status and are worn with pride. The circlet and armband are both inscribed (in Githyanki, of course) with the wearer's surname, rank, and battalion (all githyanki encountered in this adventure are all from the Mindspear Battalion). The general statistics for warriors encountered in this module are given below:

Githyanki warrior: AC 4; F3; hp 24 each; THAC0 18 (17); #AT 1 (3/2); Dmg by weapon type (1d10+2); XP 650; statistics in parentheses are for two-handed sword (specialized).

Psionics: PS = Int (15); psychometabolism (primary) and telepathy; PSPs 120; powers: Body Weaponry, Contact, Displacement, Ego Whip, Energy Containment, ESP, Flesh Armor, Id Insinuation, Intellect Fortress, Life Draining, Mental Barrier, Mind Blank, Mind Over Body, Mind Thrust, Psionic Crush, Psionic Blast, Thought Shield, Tower of Iron Will.

All warriors are trained to combine psionics and physical combat. If a githyanki warrior has a few rounds to prepare before entering combat, he has been trained to activate three powers in the following order: *One round to prepare:* Energy Containment (to absorb energy-based attacks and spells like *lightning bolt, fireball, cone of cold*); *two rounds:* above plus Graft Weapon (+1 to attack and damage rolls); *three rounds:* above, plus Displacement (−2 bonus to armor class). Because of their average power score, warriors are told to press ahead even if they fail to activate one of their powers.

A githyanki warrior can maintain these combined powers (Energy Containment remains in place until triggered, with no maintenance cost) for 23 rounds before expending all of his PSPs.

If a warrior ever loses his weapon or armor (due to some combat magic, perhaps), he can use Body Weaponry and Flesh Armor to arm and protect himself. Githyanki warriors almost never initiate a psychic contest (this responsibility is left to githyanki wizards and knights, discussed below), but will enter into one if challenged by an enemy.

Gish

The gish are githyanki fighter/mages, typically 4th level in each class. Only one rank higher than warriors in the githyanki hierarchy, they are front-line fighters, using their battle spells to help the warriors in their unit roll over opposition like storm troopers. Gish are typically armored in banded mail and wield long swords, with which they are specialized. Gish also have 2-8 garnets (100 gp each), a carved electrum circlet (150 gp), and a carved electrum armband (300 gp).

Githyanki gish: AC 4; F4/M4; hp 20 each; THAC0 17 (16); #AT 1 (3/2); Dmg by spell or weapon type (1d8+2); XP 2,000; statistics in parentheses are for long sword (specialized); Spells: 3 first-level, 2 second-level.

Gish almost always memorize destructive, combat-oriented spells. They carry their tiny spell books with them everywhere (so they can easily regain spells in the field), in small leather cases that have been magically fireproofed and acidproofed. It is rare that a gish's spell books will have more spells than he can memorize.

Psionics: PS = Int (16); psychometabolism (primary) and telepathy; PSPs 140; powers (in addition to those known by githyanki warriors): Adrenalin Control, Cell Adjustment, Death Field, Double Pain.

Gish ideal combat strategy involves casting all memorized spells from behind a protective rank of warriors, initiating psionic powers, and entering into melee. If given time, they will initiate the following powers: *1st round:* Energy Containment; *2nd round:* as above, plus Adrenalin Control (to increase Constitution by 1-6 points); *3rd round:* Graft

Weapon (increases combat bonuses to +2/+3); *4th round:* Displacement. Assume that gish have an average Constitution of 14 before using Adrenalin Control.

Gish use their other psionic powers in combat as the need (or inspiration) arises. Like other githyanki warriors, gish almost never initiate a psychic contest, avoiding such duels unless challenged. If captured, gish and all higher-ranking githyanki are expected to use their Death Field ability to commit suicide and inflict as much damage as possible to the enemy in the process.

Sergeants

Those warriors who distinguish themselves in battle (merely by surviving a few military campaigns) are elevated to the rank of sergeant and placed in command of a squad (4-16 warriors). Each sergeant is outfitted with *banded mail +1* and a *two-handed sword +1*. They also have 2-8 amethysts (250 gp each), a carved electrum circlet (150 gp), and a carved gold armband (500 gp). The sergeants encountered in this adventure are all 6th-level fighters and have the following statistics in common:

Githyanki sergeant: AC 3; F6; hp 48 each; THAC0 15 (13); #AT 1 (3/2); Dmg by weapon type (1d10+3); XP 2,000; statistics in parentheses are for *two-handed sword +1* (specialized).

Psionics: PS = Int (15); psychometabolism (primary), psychokinesis, and telepathy; PSPs 150; powers (in addition to those known by githyanki warriors): Adrenalin Control, Cell Adjustment, Death Field, Heighten Senses, Double Pain.

Sergeants are deadly opponents if given time to initiate their powers of Energy Containment, Adrenalin Control, Graft Weapon, and Displacement before they enter melee. Unless stated otherwise, assume that sergeants have an average Constitution of 14 before using Adrenalin Control.

A sergeant whose squad of warriors is slain in battle is expected to forfeit his life as well. Many employ their Death Field ability to this end.

Captains

Only the most bloodthirsty, cunning, and strong gish or sergeants survive enough military campaigns to be promoted. Githyanki captains are at the top of the chain of command, descending from a company's supreme commander down to the squad warriors. The captains encountered in this adventure are outfitted with *banded mail +2* and a *long sword +2*; they proudly display their badges of rank: 2-8 topazes (500 gp each), a carved gold circlet (450 gp), and a carved gold armband (500 gp).

Githyanki captain: AC 2; F7/M7; hp 42 each; THAC0 14 (11); #AT 3/2 (2); Dmg by weapon type (1d8+4); XP 4,000; statistics in parentheses are for *long sword +2* (specialized); Spells: 4 first-level, 3 second-level, 2 third-level, 1 fourth-level.

Captains tend to memorize destructive, combat-oriented spells, and like gish, they always carry their tiny spell books with them in a small, fire- and acidproofed leather cases. A captain's spell books rarely contain more spells than he can memorize.

Psionics: PS = Int (16); psychometabolism (primary), psychokinesis, and telepathy; PSPs 180; powers (in addition to those known by githyanki warriors): Adrenalin Control, Cell Adjustment, Death Field, Double Pain, Heighten Senses, Inertial Barrier, Molecular Agitation, Telekinesis.

Unlike gish, who typically cast their battle spells before preparing psionics and entering melee, githyanki captains prepare their psionics first. In combat, they attempt to initiate and maintain the following powers (in order of preference): Energy Containment, Inertial Barrier, Adrenalin Control, Graft Weapon, Displacement. Unless stated otherwise, assume that captains have an average Constitution of 15 before using Adrenalin Control. For the remainder of the combat, captains use their psionic abilities, spells, and melee capability as the situation warrants.

Wizards

Githyanki wizards tend to be female, like their lich-queen. Unlike the gish and captains, who devote more time to their combat training than their practice of magic, most githyanki wizards are specialist invokers (50%), necromancers (25%), or illusionists (25%). If the DM has access to the *Tome of Magic*, he may want to allow githyanki elementalists as well. Powerful elementalists must be stationed in the Prime Material plane, since summoning spells of fifth level or higher do not function in the Astral plane. No githyanki elementalists appear in this adventure.

Githyanki wizards are independent of the military chain of command, lending their support in battle where it is needed. Wizards typically wear 4-16 amethysts (250 gp each), a carved electrum circlet (150 gp) and a carved gold armband (500 gp). While their physical abilities and spell choices vary from specialist to specialist, their psionic powers vary only with level.

All 6th-level wizards have PS = Int (17); psychometabolism (primary), metapsionics, telepathy; PSPs 150; powers (in addition to those known by githyanki warriors): Adrenalin Control, Cell Adjustment, Death Field, Double Pain, and Splice.

All 8th-level wizards have PS = Int (18); psychometabolism (primary), metapsionics, telepathy; PSPs 170; powers (in addition to those known by githyanki warriors): Adrenalin Control, Cell Adjustment, Convergence, Death Field, Double Pain, Mindlink, Psionic Sense, and Splice.

Wizards prepare for combat by initiating Body Armor, Adrenalin Control (to boost Constitution), and Displacement (wizards of 6th level and above can do this in a single round using Splice). Along with the githyanki knights (see below), githyanki wizards of at least 8th level are responsible for seeking out psionic threats in combat (with Psionic Sense) and eliminating them. Wizards initiate psychic contests in combat. Once three-finger Contact has been established with an opponent's mind, a wizard uses Id Insinuation to quickly stun her adversary, employing spells on subsequent rounds to finish off the opponent.

Knights

Githyanki knights are by far the most feared warriors of their entire race. The equivalent of "anti-paladins" sworn to the personal service of their immortal lich-queen, these shadow warriors (as they are called by the githzerai) must pass survival tests on the Lower Planes to advance in their order.

Knights will follow a supreme commander's commands to the death—providing the interests of their supreme commander do not conflict with those of their lich-queen. It is a knight's sacred duty to seek out and retrieve all githyanki who reach 12th level, and return them to their capitol so the queen can

feast on their life energy. As a result, even an installation's supreme commander regards his knights with a mixture of respect and fear.

Githyanki knights are outfitted with *banded mail +4* and a two-handed *silver sword +3*. This blade, if used in the Astral plane, has a 5% chance per hit of cutting an opponent's silver cord (see the *Dungeon Master's Guide*, page 132). Knights wear 2-8 fire opals (1,000 gp each), a carved gold circlet (450 gp) and a carved gold armband (500 gp). The knights encountered in this adventure are all 9th level.

Githyanki knight: INT genius; AC 0; F9; hp 70 each; THAC0 12 (9); #AT 3/2; Dmg by weapon type (1d10+3); SA *aura of protection* (good creatures in 10' radius suffer −1 to attack rolls), *cause* (fatal) *disease* (twice/week), *inflict wounds* (18 hp damage, once/day), psionics; SD immune to disease, +2 on all saves; XP 10,000; MC8; statistics in parentheses are for *silver sword +3*. Spells: one first-level.

Psionics: PS = Int (17-18); psychometabolism (primary), metapsionics, and telepathy; PSPs 180; powers (in addition to those known by githyanki warriors): Adrenalin Control, Cell Adjustment, Convergence, Death Field, Double Pain, Inflict Pain, Mindlink, Psionic Sense, Shadow Form, Splice.

Knights prepare for combat by initiating Adrenalin Control (to boost Constitution), Graft Weapon, and Displacement in a single round using Splice. Assume that most knights have an average Constitution of 15 before using Adrenalin Control. In the absence of psionic opponents, knights maneuver themselves behind their adversaries using Shadow Form before physically attacking.

Like wizards, knights have the duty of seeking out psionic threats in combat with their Psionic Sense and eliminating them. Likewise, knights will initiate psychic contests during combat. Once three-finger Contact has been established with an opponent's mind, a knight will first use Id Insinuation to stun. If the knight is not hurried, he will seek to cripple his opponent with Mind Thrusts and Psionic Blasts before closing to deal a death blow with his *silver sword*.

Getting There

Before the PCs depart, Arelisa explains that she will keep track of their progress using her *crystal ball*. Unless they object, she checks on the party at least once a day, using the telepathic power of her *crystal ball* to reassure them of her presence.

The journey upriver from Mirabar should be relatively quiet for the PCs, although they can see signs of Storm's destruction throughout the countryside. When the PCs reach the ruins of Molina's castle, however, the dragon's devastation will be shockingly apparent. If the PCs spend time to explore here, they discover that the once-modest keep is now a blackened pile of rubble.

During her daily telepathic link, Arelisa reports that she has already searched the ruins for clues to the dragon's powers. There is nothing of interest or value to gain by searching the ruins, which have already been picked over for clues quite thoroughly. The nearby village is in ruins as well, an enormous mass grave the final resting place for those who didn't survive the dragon's onslaught. A few score survivors have started rebuilding, but it looks to be a futile task.

The villagers are still in shock and can tell the PCs little. They saw a dragon and its fiery breath. Estimates as to its size and power vary widely, and tall tales abound of how its breath set off explosions in Molina's keep. Most of the peasants are too busy grieving to be pestered for long.

Travel along the north border of Lurkwood should be a quiet respite from the grisly scenes of the dragon's destruction. The PCs should have no trouble locating Cinderspire and the entrance to Storm's lair with the directions provided by Arelisa and her daily telepathic contacts through her *crystal ball*, though the DM may want to throw in a random encounter to liven things up. The party should have ample time to prepare for their assault on what they think is simply a dragon's lair.

Cinderspire Outpost

When the PCs reach the southwestern face of Cinderspire, they should immediately realize that they are on the right track, for this whole section of the slope has been stripped bare. Large piles of dragon droppings litter the area, along with an occasional molted scale or two.

A 30'-wide hole gapes in the slope of the mountain here; it is the collapsed ceiling of a huge cavern below. The cavern floor lies at the bottom of a sheer 40' drop that cannot be descended easily because of the overhang around the hole.

Any PC with tracking proficiency will notice quite a few dragon tracks near the entrance—along with something much more disturbing. Interspersed among the dragon tracks are the tracks of humanoid creatures, of roughly human size and weight. The humanoid tracks seem to come from and lead to an inconspicuous rock outcropping nearby. Each party member who actively searches the outcropping has a 1-in-6 chance to find a secret door (locked, see below).

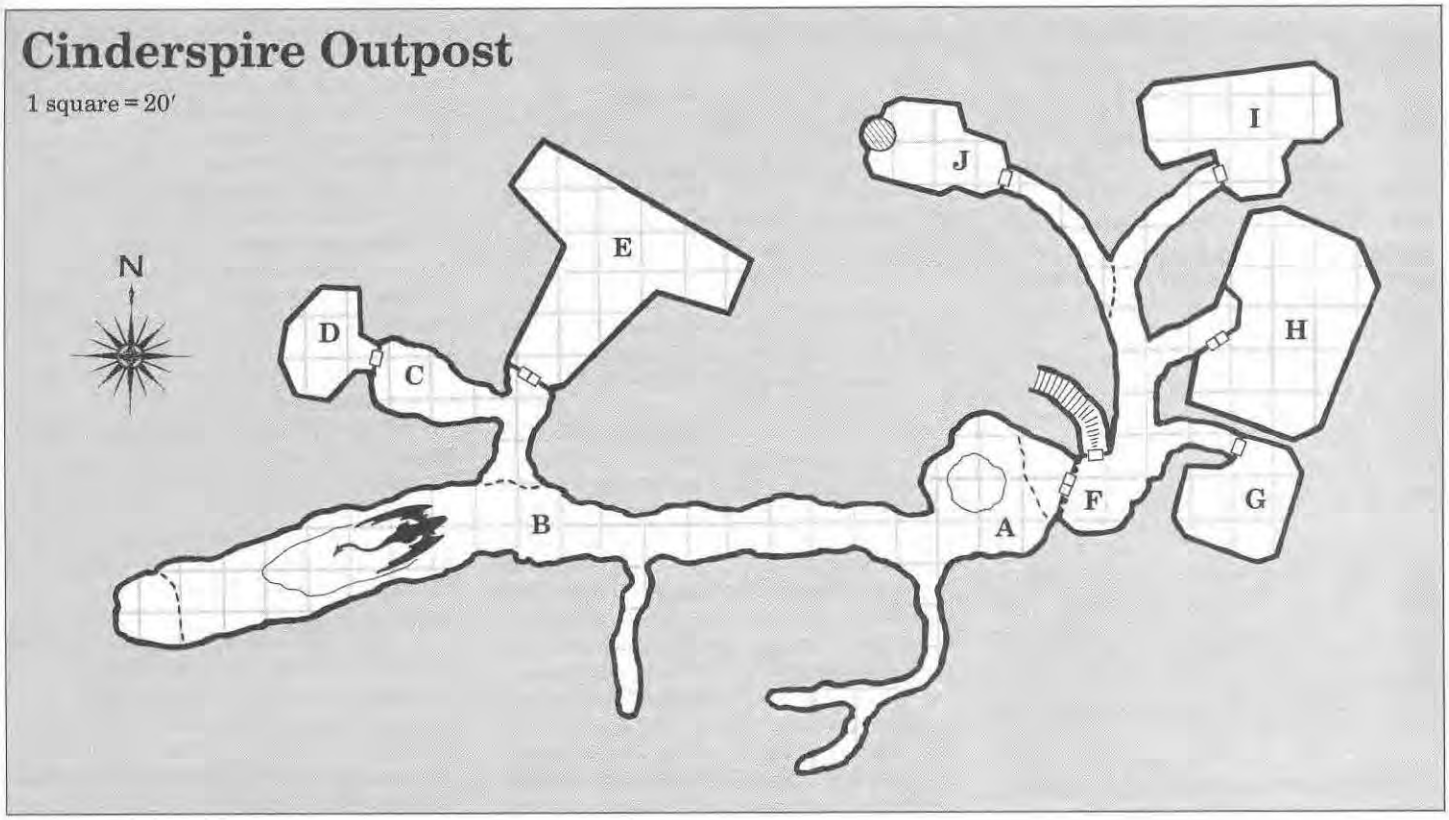
If there is no tracker in the party, the humanoid prints go unnoticed. Unless the PCs specifically state that they are searching the outside of the dragon lair in great detail (taking 2-5 turns) they have no chance of locating the secret door. Even if they do decide to tarry on the dragon's doorstep, without a tracker's guiding eye to show them where to look, the party has only a 1-in-10 chance of locating the door (in this case check once for the entire party).

The secret door is *wizard locked* (at 8th level) and doubly barred from the inside. If the door is opened silently (with the aid of magic), the PCs discover stairs leading down to area F.

A. Chimney Entrance. Read or paraphrase the following once the party descends from the opening on the mountainside to the cavern floor:

> The walls here have been worked to buttress the ceiling. The construction looks well weathered and at least several decades old. The chamber is 70' across and nearly 40' high at its highest point, where it opens to the mountain slope you came from. A 30'-wide passage heads due west. The floor has a polished, black, mirror-like surface that magnifies sounds and makes the slightest noise echo. You hear loud snoring reverberating up the passage.

Most PCs will be so distracted by the dragon that they won't pay much attention to the architecture, but a dwarf, a gnome, or any PC with mining or masonry skill will immediately recognize



the stonework as strange and alien—not the work of any race they know. Githyanki architects designed the complex and hollowed out most of its chambers using powerful spells, resulting in caverns shaped unlike those of most underground races. The walls and floors are curved, almost spherical, because the githyanki live in three dimensions in the Astral plane.

Halfway up the side of the chamber (20' above the floor) a small alcove and some stone foot- and hand-holds have been covered with an *illusionary wall.* The alcove contains a stout iron door (firmly barred from the inside) and is flanked by two arrow-loops. The door and arrow-loops lead to area F and are always guarded vigilantly by the githyanki there.

Unless they act cautiously (using silence, invisibility, etc.) the PCs will be noticed in one round, the entire complex warned by Mindlink, and an ambush prepared (see "The Githyanki Attack").

B. Storm's Lair. This is the home of Storm, a young adult red dragon. This chamber appears smaller than it actually is because of two *illusionary walls.* The dragon is sleeping after gorging herself on some prisoners captured by the githyanki, but unless the PCs are extremely cautious, she wakes and fills the entire passage leading from her lair to area A with her fiery breath. Storm is pampered and spoiled. Confident that the githyanki will come to save her, Storm fights to the death.

Storm, red dragon (young adult): INT exceptional, AL CE, AC −4; MV 9, fly 30 (C), jump 3; HD 16; hp 90; THAC0 0; #AT 3 plus special; Dmg 1d10+5/1d10+5/3d10+5; SA breath weapon, two wing buffet attacks, rear kick or tail slap, spells; SD *dragon fear* (15-yard radius, save at +3), immune to fire, can cast *affect normal fires* and *pyrotechnics* each once/day; MR 30%; SZ G (132' long); ML 17; XP 14,000; MC1.

Storm can cast each of the following spells at 18th level of ability, once per day: *shocking grasp, magic missile.*

When the PCs enter the chamber, they find Storm sleeping near an immense pile of coinage. Since Storm is a githyanki pet, however, her masters have given her only token treasure to play with (including a few *cursed* items that no one in the battalion has found any use for). The dragon's paltry hoard includes an enormous pile of 17,345 cp, 22,484 sp, 2,147 gp, and 698 pp. A whole armory of 14 miscellaneous weapons and seven suits of armor protrudes from the pile, although most of the pieces are in bad repair. Some seared silks are strewn about, but only three bolts are salvageable (worth 300 gp each). Beneath a charred and valueless rug hides a chest containing 37 brass lamps (worth 2-5 gp each). At the bottom of the chest are the pieces of a wheel-lock pistol but no smoke powder (the pistol needs a flint) and three miscellaneous pieces of jewelry to be determined randomly by the DM (none should be more valuable than 1,500 gp, however). For each turn of digging in the coinage, there is a 1-in-6 chance of discovering one of the following items (roll 1d4):

1. A massive *two-handed sword +2* (actually a *cursed berserking sword*) named Helmsplitter. The chaotic-neutral blade has an Intelligence of 15 and an ego of 8. It can detect good, evil, magic, and invisibility, and communicates by empathy.

2. A brass *necklace of thought*

shielding (actually a *medallion of thought projection*).

3. A *crystal ball* (actually a *crystal hypnosis ball* that will attract the attention of the githyanki lich-queen in the Astral plane every time it is used).

4. A silver *ring of ogre strength* (actually a *ring of weakness*).

Behind the *illusionary wall* at the rear of the chamber, a githyanki **knight** stands guard over Storm. As soon as the PCs attack Storm, he warns Commander Veldrada in area H and the knight in area D of the intrusion by Mindlink (this takes one round). Refer to the "Githyanki Attack" section at the end of the Cinderspire Outpost area descriptions for what happens next.

C. Stores. Crates of supplies raided from nearby villages have been stacked against the walls here, along with the unconscious forms of 28 **peasants** (zero-level humans) in chains. The githyanki keep them here to feed the dragon and to provide a source of life energy (using their Life Draining power) if the lair is raided.

D. Knights' Quarters. These austere quarters are divided into two living areas, each containing a small wooden platform (for meditation), a crude cot, and a chest (containing only clothing and a few weapons).

There is a single githyanki **knight** here, meditating on his wooden platform in the northern corner of the room.

E. Squad Quarters. This barracks is as austere as the knights' quarters and houses 25 githyanki. Each member of the squad has a meditation platform, cot, and chest filled with personal items.

There are currently 10 **warriors**, a **gish** (spells: *burning hands, magic missile* (×2)*; stinking cloud, web*), and two **sergeants** here. When the PCs enter this chamber, six of the githyanki are sleeping while the others are meditating.

F. Guard Post. There are always 10 githyanki **warriors**, a **gish** (spells: *burning hands, hold portal, magic missile; Melf's acid arrow, ray of enfeeblement*), and a **sergeant** on duty here, all armed with light crossbows. Unless the party enters the lair invisibly, the guards report the intrusion to Commander Veldrada in area H within one round.

G. Officer's Quarters. Each of the three living areas in this room contains a meditation platform, a cot, and a chest filled with personal items belonging to a githyanki captain and two wizards. Currently only the **captain** (spells: *magic missile* (×3)*, shocking grasp; Melf's acid arrow, mirror image, wizard lock; fireball, lightning bolt; fire shield*) is here, meditating on one of the platforms.

H. Hall. This is the dining and meeting hall for the lair, but there are only three githyanki leaders present now, arguing over a map.

Among githyanki, illusionists like Fretza play an important role in the concealment of lairs. Fretza cast all of the *illusionary wall* spells, and she feels that lair security is her responsibility. Fretza wears long brown robes to denote her specialization among githyanki. She carries no treasure other than her traveling spell books (containing all the spells she currently has memorized).

Fretza, githyanki illusionist: INT genius; AC 7 plus Flesh Armor; I8; hp 25; THAC0 18; #AT 1; Dmg by spell or weapon type; D 17, C 14, I 17, W 15; XP 5,000.

Spells: *audible glamer, color spray, phantasmal force, spook, ventriloquism; alter self, hypnotic pattern, mirror image, wizard lock; haste, hold person, invisibility 10' radius, spectral force; charm monster, phantasmal killer, vacancy.*

Ilgeyev is a typical githyanki battle mage; he craves battle and loves blowing things up. He wears yellow robes to denote his specialization and carries no treasure other than his traveling spell books (containing all the spells he currently has memorized).

Ilgeyev, githyanki battle mage: INT genius; AC 10 (*stoneskin* can absorb six attacks) plus Flesh Armor; M8 (invoker); hp 40; THAC0 18; #AT 1; Dmg by spell or weapon type; C 16, I 17, W 16; ML 10; XP 5,000.

Spells: *burning hands, chill touch, magic missile, shocking grasp, wall of fog; darkness 15' radius, invisibility, Melf's acid arrow, mirror image, ray of enfeeblement; dispel magic, haste, lightning bolt, vampiric touch; enervation, thunder staff*, wall of fire.*

Veldrada is the supreme commander of the githyanki lair and has complete control over the lives of those under his command. If he orders githyanki to fight to the death, they will do so. Veldrada wears *plate mail +4* and wields a special *silver two-handed sword +5* (no vorpal capabilities). He defends this lair with his life and the lives of those under his command.

Commander Veldrada, githyanki: INT genius; AC −2 (*stoneskin* absorbs seven attacks); F9/M9; hp 76; THAC0 12 (3 with *silver sword*); #AT 3/2 (2 with *silver sword*); Dmg by weapon type (1d10+11 with *silver sword*); SA specialized in long sword and two-handed sword; S 18/94, D 15, C 17, I 17; XP 12,000.

Spells: *burning hands, magic missile* (×2)*, shocking grasp; Melf's acid arrow, ray of enfeeblement, wizard lock; dispel magic, lightning bolt, Melf's minute meteors; fire shield, wall of ice; cone of cold.*

Psionics: PS = Int (17); metapsionics, psychometabolism (primary), psychokinesis, and telepathy; PSPs 190; (in addition to those known by githyanki warriors): Adrenalin Control, Cell Adjustment, Control Body, Death Field, Disintegrate, Double Pain, Inertial Barrier, Molecular Agitation, Soften, Splice, Telekinesis.

When the PCs enter the lair, the three officers are looking over detailed plans of Mirabar's fortifications. A *wizard locked* chest (9th level) in a corner of the room contains similar plans of Molina's destroyed keep, the fortifications at Luskan, and a few fortified manor houses north of Neverwinter and Longsaddle. If any of the PCs have castles in the northern realms, they will find frighteningly complete plans of their strongholds here as well.

If an alert is sounded, Fretza covers this chamber with a *vacancy* spell to make it appear empty and long deserted before proceeding to the battle.

I. Commander's Quarters. Only one person lives in this large room—which contains the standard meditation platform, cot, and chest—but the area is currently empty. The *wizard locked* chest (9th level) contains personal items and clothing as well as Commander Veldrada's traveling spell books (which contain all the spells he currently has memorized; see area H).

J. Portal Chamber. The corridor leading to this chamber is hidden by an *illusionary wall.* The side corridor can be found if the PCs search the walls of the lair for secret doors (or possibly by other magical means, like a *detect*

magic spell). The door to this chamber is *wizard locked* (at 6th level), and its interior is brightly lit by *continual light* spells.

> This chamber is surprisingly ornate compared to the austere and featureless quarters throughout the rest of this complex. The floor, ceiling, and walls of the room have been completely covered with strange runes. Although the runework is impressive, your attention is immediately drawn to what appears to be a large silvery orb that partially protrudes from the wall opposite the door. The spherical surface is nearly 7′ across.

If the PCs cast a *detect magic* spell, they discover that the runes radiate strong alteration and conjuration/summoning magic. The runes are part of the process of conjuring a fixed portal leading to the Astral plane (see "*Peregrin's Treatise on Fixed Portals*").

The large silvery bubble is in fact a fixed portal. PCs stepping into it are immediately transported to the Astral plane with everything they are carrying, emerging in area 1 of Mindspear castle.

The Githyanki Attack

The githyanki in the Cinderspire base can respond to an alert with deadly efficiency. As soon as the alert is broadcast to the entire lair, use the following time line to coordinate githyanki activity.

Since many githyanki will fail some power checks, rolling many 1d20 results beforehand or even determining which powers are successfully initiated for this encounter can ease the combat considerably. This large battle will probably take place in area B, while the party is fighting Storm.

First round (after alert): The githyanki knights assume Shadow Form and approach within 30′ of each other. Githyanki from area E initiate Graft Weapon. Githyanki from areas G-I assemble in area A.

Second round: The knights use Convergence, gaining a single consciousness and pool of PSPs. Githyanki from area E initiate Displacement. Githyanki from areas G-I initiate Graft Weapon.

Third round: The knights use Splice to initiate Energy Containment, Graft Weapon, Displacement, and Adrenalin Control in a single round. Githyanki from area E initiate Energy Containment. Githyanki from areas G-I initiate Displacement.

If Storm appears to be badly wounded by this point, one knight, one sergeant, and five warriors go to distract the PCs while the remainder continue their preparations.

Fourth round: One knight uses Psionic Sense to target psionicists, the other knight either attacks with psionics (if the party has a psionicist) or with his sword. Githyanki from area E drain four extra hit points each from the 28 unconscious peasants in area C. Githyanki from areas G-I initiate Energy Containment.

Fifth round: Both knights attack physically or with psionics from Shadow Form. Githyanki from area E drain four more extra hit points (the peasants are all reduced to −8 hp). Fretza casts *invisibility 10′ radius* on all githyanki from areas G-I, who move to area B.

Sixth round: The knights continue to attack. Githyanki from area E engage the party from behind the *illusionary wall* leading to area C (check for party surprise). The party is also attacked by Ilgeyev's *fireball*, Veldrada's *fireball*, and the captain's *lightning bolt*. The gish from area F casts *magic missile*, and Grenza casts *haste*. At the end of the round, 10 *hasted invisible* warriors and the sergeant from area G get a single attack on the party from behind (check again for surprise).

Seventh round and after: The knights, warriors, and sergeants melee with the party while the two gish, captain, Grenza, Ilgeyev, and Veldrada cast spells. Once their useful spells are exhausted, these githyanki enter melee also.

Each githyanki can take one direct hit from a *fireball*, *lightning bolt*, or *cone of cold* and sustain no damage because of Energy Containment. This battle with the githyanki should be very tough, considering that the PCs (unless they are extremely observant) probably won't be expecting it. The DM should make the encounter harsh and difficult, but not impossible. If the PCs break off the fight, the githyanki will not send out more than a token pursuit: one knight, a sergeant, and five warriors.

The fighting continues until the githyanki appear to be losing, in which case the commander orders Ilgeyev to cover their retreat with a *wall of fire* as the surviving githyanki withdraw to area G, shutting and *wizard locking* (6th level) the door behind them. There they will heal as much as possible with Cell Adjustment and either attack the party again (if the party appeared on their last legs) or go through the fixed portal in area J to warn the battalion of their defeat and ask for reinforcements. Twenty warriors, two gish, a sergeant, a captain, and a knight arrive within two turns. If this occurs, the party is almost certainly doomed.

After the Battle

After the PCs have had a chance to explore the githyanki lair, they receive a telepathic Contact from Arelisa, asking them about the success of their mission. Arelisa plays the role of the fragile, innocent noblewoman to the hilt, sounding mortified to learn of the githyanki present in the lair, and appearing gravely concerned about the party's current welfare. If the party can convince her of the lair's safety, she will offer to Teleport there from Mirabar and give whatever aid she can to puzzle out the curious findings in the githyanki lair.

Upon her arrival, Arelisa immediately offers the party all of her *extra-healing* potions and even the use of her scrolls if any party members were slain. If there is no cleric in the party, she offers to read the *raise dead* spell herself, but not guarantee any results since she is not a cleric.

A *nondetection* spell that Arelisa has cast on herself prevents the PCs from discovering that she is actually far from surprised at the outcome of the encounter with the githyanki. She cares for the party's strength because she thinks they may be of further use to her.

After the party has been healed, Arelisa helps the PCs tour the lair, pointing out illusions they missed (she is very experienced in these common githyanki tricks). Eventually she leads them to area J, where she seems genuinely distressed as she regards the large silvery orb. Arelisa immediately realizes that the githyanki are probably planning to build one of these fixed portals to her own home plane of Limbo (she will not tell the PCs this, of course). She gathers the surviving PCs and delivers a carefully worded speech:

> "This is a permanent gate, and I suspect it leads directly to the githyanki's home reality, the Silver

Realm, also known as the Astral Plane. So long as this gate remains open, it poses a dire threat not only to my lands, but also to the entire northern Realms, for these Astral warriors are known to conquer and destroy all that they come in contact with. The presence of both the dragon and the maps point to their long-term interest in this region.

"If this is true, then the situation here could not be worse. From my limited knowledge of the subject I know that planar shifting, the normal mode of travel that the githyanki use to move from plane to plane, is far from precise, but a gate such as this can deliver a mass of their warriors to this complex in an instant with pinpoint accuracy.

"If you could find a way to destroy this gate and prevent the githyanki from building another, then the threat from a mass assault would be all but eliminated. What I propose is that I disguise you to look like githyanki so that you can infiltrate their stronghold. For the sake of the Northlands safety, you should seek out information to help close this fixed portal and prevent others from being built.

"This is a dangerous mission, but I know it is not beyond your abilities. Think on what befell poor Molina and her household before you decide to leave business with the githyanki unfinished."

Molina's example should send shivers down the spines of any PCs owning strongholds in the northern Realms. Arelisa adds that her texts on the githyanki emphasize that they are a vengeful, warlike race. Molina must have earned their enmity at some point in the past to warrant the githyanki's harsh retribution. Arelisa is hoping that, if the chance to be heroes is not enough to motivate the party to step through the gate, perhaps the fear of a future githyanki reprisal will. If the PCs are still having trouble deciding whether to accept the new mission, the paltry dragon hoard and possible githyanki riches might be further enticement to sneak about the Astral plane. After all, the treasures from Molina's stronghold must have gone somewhere.

Presuming that the party agrees (however reluctantly), Arelisa suggests that they rest here only long enough to regain spells before passing through the fixed portal (four to six hours at most). She has enough make-up and wigs in her *bag of holding* to disguise four PCs to look like githyanki. They should take battle gear from those githyanki slain in the lair to make their costumes more realistic. She can also cast a *seeming* spell from one of her scrolls to disguise up to four more PCs. Arelisa cautions that the nonmagical disguises cannot stand up to more than a few rounds of combat and urges the PCs to avoid armed conflict if at all possible.

While the party is making preparations, Arelisa answers any questions they have about the Astral plane. She can share the information presented in "The Silver Realm" section. Arelisa will not accompany the party to the Astral plane for any reason, stating that someone must remain behind and report the location of the gate with all possible haste to the noble council in Mirabar. If one of the PCs volunteers to stay or to find someone else to go to Mirabar, she states that she isn't suited to join the PCs in such work. Arelisa gladly gives the party the scrolls and potions from her *bag of holding* to help on their mission. She will not give them the *bag* itself, saying that it would be useless on the Astral plane.

The Silver Realm

Arelisa warns the PCs that they cannot regain spells or PSPs in the Astral plane because subjective time passes so slowly there. The DM should read the *MotP* description of the Astral plane before running this module. If the *MotP* is not available, a brief summary of the basics is given below.

The Astral plane is an interdimensional reality ruled by the githyanki and used mostly as a transition zone between other planes of existence. There is no gravity in the Astral plane, and beings can move about by pushing off other objects (a very inefficient means of transit), or by willing themselves to move in a certain direction (a being has a movement rate of three times its Intelligence score in the Astral plane, except the githyanki, who have a movement rate of 96). For the purposes of this adventure, which occurs mostly in the close confines of a castle, movement rates should have little or no effect.

Physical strength and dexterity have little to do with combat in the Astral plane. Use a being's Intelligence instead of Strength to determine combat bonuses, and use Wisdom to determine reaction adjustment. In this adventure, armor class has already been adjusted for high Wisdom. For instance, a mage with an Intelligence of 17 gets a +1 to attack and damage rolls, and a priest with a Wisdom of 18 has a +2 reaction adjustment and −4 bonus to armor class.

Finally, certain spells don't work in the Astral plane. High-level conjuration and summoning spells are most affected; only priest spells below fourth level and wizard spells below fifth level function. All other conjurations and summonings have no effect when cast in the Astral plane. Spells or items that contact any extra-dimensional space (like *bags of holding, portable holes*, and the *deep-pockets* or *rope trick* spell) are inoperable in the Astral plane as well. Spells that affect physical movement (like *fly* and *jump*) have no effect on mental movement. *Haste* and *slow* spells still increase a PC's physical attacks.

Magical items are largely unaffected unless they duplicate a spell that doesn't function in the Astral plane. Magical weapons and armor forged on the Prime Material plane lose one "plus" when they enter the Astral plane (the bonus returns when the item is taken home). Most githyanki swords and armor keep their enchantments on both the Astral and Prime Material planes.

Mindspear Castle

Mindspear castle is a major githyanki stronghold in the Astral plane. The walls of the castle have been magically warded to prevent dimensional travel from outside to inside the castle (this includes *dimension door, plane shift,* and *teleport* spells along with psychoportive psionic abilities; the more powerful *teleport without error* spell still works). Inside the castle, *teleportation* and dimensional travel are possible, but *plane shifting* is still impossible.

Although the lack of gravity makes three-dimensional movement possible, terms such as "up," "down," "ceiling," and "floor" are still used in the room descriptions for clarity. Unless otherwise noted, all interiors are illuminated

by *continual light* spells.

Githyanki are not known for imaginative interior decor. All rooms in this castle are austere and strictly functional. The spartan furnishings of all living areas are always bolted down to the floor (or ceiling) to prevent them from floating away in the zero gravity of the Astral plane. These furnishings typically include a wooden meditation platform (which doubles as a desk) and a chest for personal belongings (spare clothing, weapons, armor, and the like). These chests may contain any other minor magical goodies that the DM cares to place there (like a potion of *extra-healing*) but are rarely locked (thievery is uncommon among the githyanki).

Finally, the pyramidal tops of all four towers are constructed out of a clear bricklike substance with the transparency of glass but the properties of stone. These tower tops offer spectacular views.

Read the following to the players when the PCs get their first view of the Astral plane:

> You see the vast, bleak expanse of the Silver Realm extending in all directions. Everywhere, small spiraling points of light coalesce from the formless gray and black of the Astral plane. The lights pinwheel across the darkness and eventually disintegrate, like falling stars but moving in all directions, above and below you, falling toward you and away.

The Githyanki Garrison

When the PCs arrive in the Astral plane, the Mindspear Battalion includes 80 warriors, eight gish, six sergeants, three captains, and six knights. The battalion's strength is considerably augmented by Apocalypse, a mature adult red dragon. In addition to this small army, Mindspear boasts four wizards and three officers of considerable power. For the PCs to confront all these githyanki is suicide (each of the knights is of comparable power to the PCs). Instead, the PCs must sneak around in disguise, investigating the castle without looking too obviously lost or out of place.

Most githyanki use their psionics and spells sparingly in the Astral plane because of the difficulty in recovering lost PSPs (they need to *plane shift* to a reality where time functions normally). Githyanki use psionics on arriving at the scene of a battle, just before entering the fight. As a result, PC psionicists should take care not to make their presence felt by using too much psionics themselves, because psychic noise can be detected by githyanki knights and powerful wizards.

Because the PCs are not expected to blast away at everything in sight, the combat abilities of the majority of the castle's garrison are left to the DM (refer to the previous "Githyanki and Strategies" section). Mindspear is so involved in military drills and training that a carefully disguised party can slip about unnoticed and unchallenged. Whether or not a party's action warrants notice by the preoccupied githyanki is up to the DM's discretion.

Random Encounters in Mindspear Castle

Check once every turn for random encounters (1 in 6 chance, roll percentile dice and consult the table below). The castle will be placed on alert sooner or later, unless the party has calm nerves and good luck. Once this happens, the chance for an encounter doubles, and unfamiliar githyanki will be stopped and questioned by others of equal or superior rank.

Mindspear Random Encounters

01-50	2-12 githyanki warriors
51-70	two gish and a sergeant
71-75	two sergeants and a captain
76-85	1-4 knights
86-90	Reroll on "NPC Encounters" table
91-00	Roll twice (ignoring subsequent rolls of 91-00)

NPC Encounters

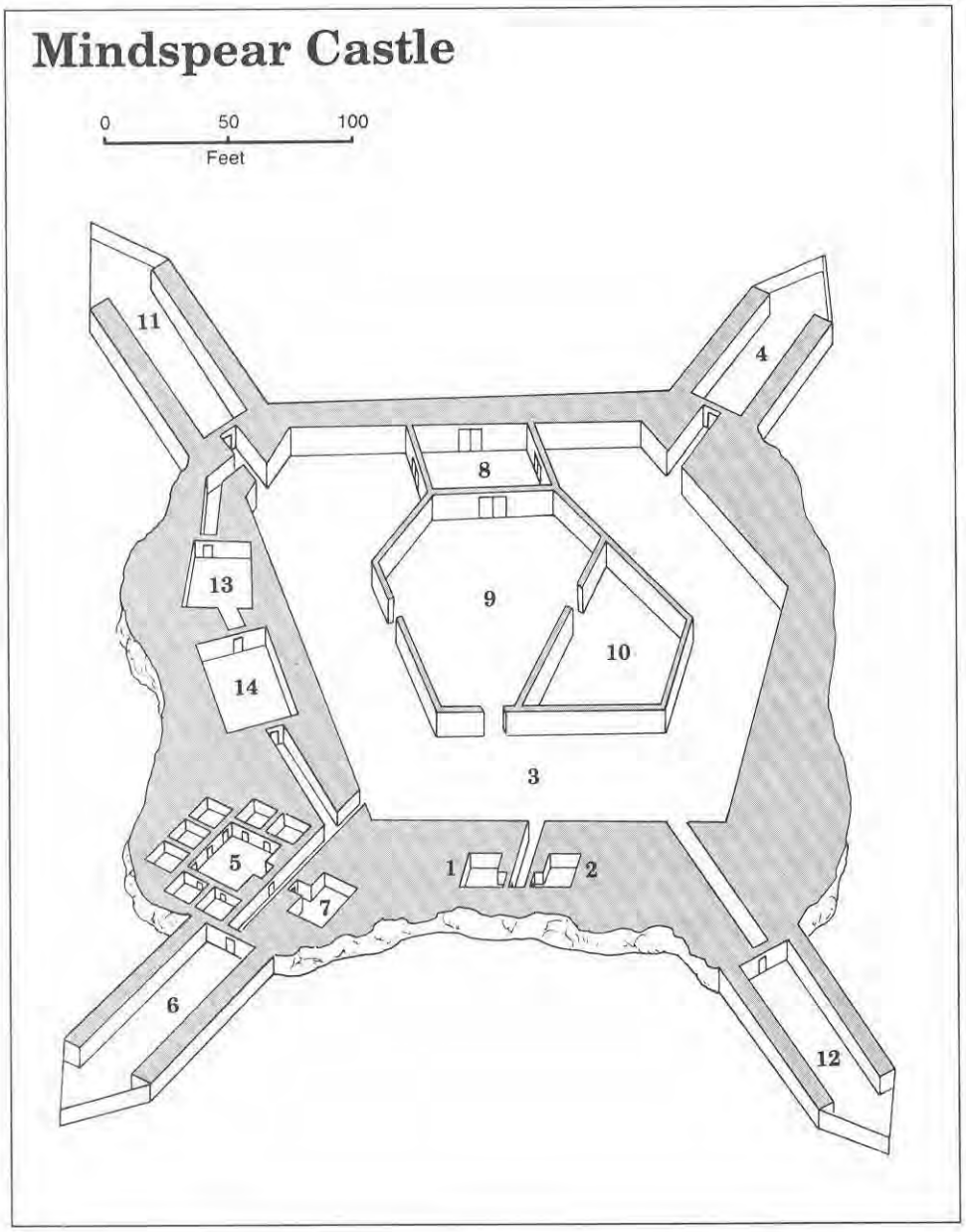
1-2	Mage Wentri (area 4)
3	Commander Vladmir (area 13)
4	Hr'a'cknir Tropos (area 13)
5	Arch-Knight Galdvisk with 1-2 knights (area 13)
6	Sorceress Cherkva (area 14)

Mindspear Castle Encounter Areas

1. Portal. When the party steps into the fixed portal in area J of the Cinderspire outpost, read or paraphrase the following to the players:

> Walking into the silver-gray orb is like sliding into a pool of ooze or jelly. A split second later—faster than it takes you to take a breath—you break the surface tension on the opposite side and emerge into a kaleidoscope of swirling colors. The gate behind you looks like a pale gray sphere. You are no longer standing on a floor, but floating in the middle of an ocean of blue, green, and red lights with no walls in sight. The effect is exhilarating but disorienting; which way is up—or down, for that matter? Floating at the center of the flashing colors is a small island of calm, a chunk of rock sporting a closed door and nothing else (not even walls). A bright pink rune has been inscribed on the door, and the rune's color seems to reflect the chromatic splashes of light that dance everywhere.
>
> Suddenly a burst of color shifts near the door to reveal an old man sitting cross-legged near the edge of the rock, looking at you intently with bulbous eyes. In his lap, the human holds a curious long sword with a golden, upswept hilt. His wide fingers play nervously along the blade as he addresses you in a thick, croaking accent.
>
> "I don't know who you are, or why you came, but I suggest you turn around and go back." He sounds coolly skeptical. Suddenly, his voice lowers to a more conspiratorial tone. "This is a frightful place, full of wide open spaces. I wouldn't wish it on my worst enemy!" His bulbous eyes widen as he remembers something important.
>
> While speaking, the odd man has floated up from his sitting position on the rock, legs still crossed. By now he is hovering 5′ from the floor, much like you. "I suppose you just want to get through, eh?" He chuckles amiably and turns in mid-air, his wide, padded fingers reaching toward the shimmering rune on the door, the only stable feature in this pocket of unreality.

If not impeded, the old man will touch the rune (actually a *symbol of pain*), temporarily deactivating it. He ushers the PCs into the corridor beyond the door and returns to watching the chromatic light show. This may sound sim-



ple, but unless the PCs have visited the Astral plane before, they will be stuck floating in the middle of this chamber until they discover that they can move by thinking in the appropriate direction. While this "acclimatization" is taking place for the PCs, the old man waits impatiently by the open door, whistling nervously.

The old fellow is actually a demented gray slaad named Drova. Although he is not physically restrained from leaving this chamber, Hr'a'cknir Tropos (see area 13) has tampered with his mind using Psychic Surgery, making the slaad agoraphobic (afraid of large, open spaces). The mere prospect of stepping out into the vast chambers beyond this one terrifies the slaad, so he is content to remain here.

However, this fear is a rationalization that Tropos has created to mask three other compulsions embedded in the slaad's mind:

1. He cannot, under any circumstances, harm a githyanki.

2. He should slay all nongithyanki that enter this chamber (unless they are prisoners of other githyanki).

3. He may never leave this chamber.

Of course, the slaad's conscious mind is completely unaware of these compulsions. If asked why he won't leave this chamber, he will reply that it is too frighteningly big outside (he thinks he is quite fortunate to have found so cozy a hidey-hole). Drova will become hysterical and attack if the party tries to force him to leave the chamber.

Drova, gray slaad: INT high, AL CN, AC −2; MV 42; HD 10+6; hp 67; THAC0 9; #AT 3 or 2; Dmg 2d4+2/2d4+2/2d8 or by weapon type; SA spells; SD spells; MR 60%; SZ M; ML 16; XP 45,000; MC8.

Drova can cast the following spells, once/round, at will: *advanced illusion, darkness 15' radius, fear, flame strike, infravision, invisibility, know alignment, lightning bolt, wind walk, shape change* (between slaad and man form). Drova can also cast *power word blind* and *symbol of pain* spells once each per day.

In his form of an old man, Drova fights with a *long sword +3*. He has chosen this form to make him appear as nonthreatening and servile as possible to the githyanki.

In an effort to make the boring rune-marked walls of his domicile more hospitable, Drova has covered them up with an *advanced illusion* of his home, the plane of Limbo, where he was captured by a party of githyanki knights who were scouring the plane looking for a site to build a new, secure lair. The next thing the slaad remembers is the charitable commander letting him stay in this safe, secluded (but quite boring) chamber.

If the illusion is successfully *dispelled* (treat as the spell of a 10th-level caster), the PCs will discover that they are floating in a cubic chamber roughly 20' on a side, its walls covered with elaborate alteration and conjuration/summoning runes. A sturdy iron door set in the middle of one wall and the silver surface of the portal back to Cinderspire are the only other features of the chamber. Of course, dispelling the illusion will enrage the old man, who screams "How DARE you!" In one round he changes back into his natural form (a 6'-tall, gray, froglike creature with claws like short swords and a mouth filled with daggerlike teeth) and hisses menacingly while he restores the appearance of his home by casting another *advanced illusion*. On the next round he transforms back into his old man form, flashes an embarrassed

smile, and reminds the PCs that they were just leaving.

The compulsions have taken root in the slaad's mind with some setbacks. In fact, he actually slew a small party of githyanki who disturbed his seclusion before Tropos doubly reinforced his "Thou shalt not harm any githyanki" compulsion. Because of this deep-seated compulsion, however, Drova will not feel the slightest desire to harm any disguised PCs unless he is attacked. Drova will fight to defend his life, regardless of whether or not his assailants are githyanki. Despite the hr'a'cknir's insistence that the slaad is now "safe," githyanki shun this chamber and enter it only when traveling to Cinderspire.

All hints of the slaad's capture, Domination, and subsequent Psychic Surgery were adeptly erased by the capable Hr'a'cknir Tropos, but not without making the already eccentric slaad at least partially insane. The PCs can try to converse with the slaad but will meet with only limited success because of Drova's dementia. He knows very little about the githyanki stronghold other than the names of the commander (Vladmir) and his chief advisor (Tropos).

The DM should use the confused slaad for all the role-playing value he's worth. He can change mood and topic in midsentence, but he's mostly harmless.

2. Future Portal. The door to this chamber is *wizard locked* at 10th level.

Commander Vladmir intends to turn this room into another portal chamber, one that leads to Limbo, the home plane of the githzerai. To this end, he has dispatched almost three-quarters of his forces to that plane. There, the githyanki are busy gathering the necessary components to build the portal and establishing a secure lair.

So far, only a tenth of the components necessary to build the portal have been collected and transported back from Limbo. Sorceress Cherkva (see area 14) has sketched the outlines of runes in charcoal across most of the floor, ceiling, and walls, but only a small portion of the symbols have been painted and completed. The patterns are strongly reminiscent of area J in the Cinderspire outpost and area 1 in Mindspear Castle.

A small cloud of objects floats in the room near the completed runes. A few small spheres of paint and pigment float near quills made of long gray feathers. If the spheres are touched, they quickly spread across any surface, leaving a huge indelible stain in clothing; the paints are otherwise harmless. Pots and jars of costly, magical pigments also float nearby, although all are nearly empty (which is why work in this chamber has come to a halt).

3. Main Githyanki Quarters. This immense, cavernous chamber is the focal point for social life in the castle. The walls are covered with hundreds of personal living areas, a few bull's eye targets for crossbow practice, and the dark splatters of dried githyanki blood. Most of the githyanki garrison spend their off duty time here, either training, meditating, or playing painful githyanki games. Most of the garrison is on duty in Limbo, so this vast room seems very empty.

There are always 40 **warriors**, four **gish**, four **sergeants**, and one **captain** in this chamber. Since there are so many exits into other areas of the castle, any adventurers disguised as githyanki are completely ignored. The chance for a random encounter is twice normal while the PCs remain in this chamber.

4. Wizards' Tower. The entrance to this chamber is *wizard locked* (6th level). Loud squawks, shrieks, and a faint sulfurous stench seep through the shut portal. Whoever enters this room is asking for trouble, since the chamber's inhabitants clearly do not want to be disturbed.

Several hour ago, two illusionists named Uba and Hentha started an argument over who could conjure the more fearsome illusion of a tanar'ri. They each invoked a *spectral force* and have forced their illusory vrock into combat with each other. Now their contest has deteriorated into a roaring of expletives, which these spectral tanar'ri hurl alternately at each other and their conjurers. A third wizard, a female githyanki named Wentri, has long since abandoned her meditations and watches this contest with amusement. The three wizards are so engrossed that they ignore any alarm or call to battle and continue until one of the two illusionists collapses from sheer exhaustion or frustration.

If anyone dares to disturb the githyanki's contest, read the following to the players:

As you open the door, you immediately notice two large birdlike creatures grappling in the center of the chamber. Although possessing the body and muscled arms of a giant, these monsters each have the head, wings, and talons of a hideous vulture over 8′ tall! The creatures are squawking as they tumble together in a ball of twisting claws, snapping beaks, and beating wings. A few brown, sulfurous feathers have drifted away from the battle and float near the entrance.

Near the back of the chamber, two brown-robed and a single yellow-robed githyanki are watching the battle of the monsters with considerable interest. Suddenly, the two brown-robed githyanki shout angrily and point toward you. The two vulturelike monsters stop fighting immediately, craning their bobbing heads in your direction.

The illusory vrock attack immediately. The DM should run the combat normally (treat the vrock as AC −5) and roll five attack dice for each one, but express considerable dismay when all of their attacks fail to hit. Record damage inflicted on them very gravely, although the illusions have no hit points and appear suspiciously unaffected by all blows. In the following round, both of the creatures spew a cloud of foul-smelling spores over the entire party. Have everyone roll a saving throw but declare that all the PCs made it (regardless of their die rolls). On the third round, both creatures explode in huge balls of fire (have everyone roll a saving throw, but once again—count their lucky stars—the entire party emerges unscathed) and can be seen bubbling away in two spherical spools of sulfurous ichor.

Of course, Uba and Hentha are only using these three rounds to buy time. In the first round that the PCs enter, they stop concentrating on their *spectral forces* and initiate Flesh Armor. They cast *mirror image* (getting 1d4+3 images each) in the second round, and *blink* in the third (this is the round that the illusory vrock explode). For the six rounds that *blink* is in effect, the illusionists cast three first-level spells and then throw darts.

Uba, githyanki illusionist: INT genius; AC 6 plus Flesh Armor; I6; hp 27; THAC0 19 (17 with darts); #AT 3; Dmg by spell, or by weapon type +1; C 15, I 17, W 18; ML 10; XP 3,000; pouch with 18 darts.

Spells: *charm person, color spray* (×2), *phantasmal force, spook; hypnotic pattern, insatiable thirst*; haste.* Already cast: *mirror image, blink, spectral force.*

Hentha, githyanki illusionist: INT genius; AC 7 plus Flesh Armor; I6; hp 21; THAC0 19 (17 with darts); #AT 1; Dmg by spell, or by weapon type +2; I 18, W 17; ML 10; XP 3,000; pouch with 18 darts.

Spells: *audible glamer, charm person, color spray, taunt, ventriloquism; darkness 15′ radius, stinking cloud; invisibility 10′ radius.* Already cast: *mirror image, blink, spectral force.*

The third mage, Wentri, is not idle during these three rounds. She first casts a *dispel magic* spell on the entire

Peregrin's Treatise on Fixed Portals

Although fixed portals have existed in the Astral plane long before recorded time, even before Gith liberated her children from the illithids, no one devoted much time to studying them before archmage Peregrin Graycloak decided to settle in the Silver Realm. Long after his fleet of void cruisers had become a reality (see "Voidjammers," DRAGON® magazine #159), Peregrin pursued the mystery of fixed portals.

Peregrin's Treatise can be used by any wizard (or psionicist with access to the Psychoportation discipline) of at least 10th level. This work describes how to create (or destroy) a permanent, stable gate between any reality and the Astral Plane. The instructions in this book are written in a special magical script that cannot be copied without destroying the book.

To successfully open a gate, the builder must be personally familiar with both end points of the gate. The portal builder must assemble rare magical inks and powdered components from the destination plane (taking 1-4 weeks and costing no less that 50,000 gp, plus 5,000 gp per level below 18th) and inscribe elaborate magical runes at each of the portal's intended end points.

Drawing the inscriptions at *each* of the gate's end points takes at least one week, plus one week per level of the caster below 18. Once the inscriptions are properly completed (roll an Intelligence check), the ritual for creating a gate takes an entire week, permanently drains the caster of one point of Constitution, and ages him for 10% of his natural life span (all regardless of success). The base chance of success for an 18th-level wizard or psionicist is 95%; for each level below 18, subtract 5% from the chance of success and add 5% to the chance of catastrophic failure.

For example, a 12th-level wizard decides to create a portal between the Forgotten Realms and the Astral plane using the rites described in *Peregrin's Treatise.* After studying the book for at least a month, he consults the apothecaries in Calimport and rounds up the desired components in three weeks, spending 80,000 gp in the process. The wizard spends the next seven weeks inscribing the runes in the Astral plane and in the Realms, and then spends an additional week performing the rite, losing a point of Constitution and aging 10 years. Even after all this time and effort, he has only a 65% chance of success, and a 30% chance of catastrophic failure (perhaps *gating* in a powerful creature from the Lower Planes that is not at all happy about being summoned, or even *gating* the wizard himself to the Lower Planes).

The final chapter of the book describes how to destroy a fixed portal. The essential step requires finding the keyrune at the heart of the rune network inscribed when the fixed portal was created (there is one keyrune on each side of the gate). If the keyrune on either side is located, the fixed portal can be destroyed by successfully casting a *dispel magic* spell on the keyrune, against a spell cast at the 18th level of experience (a *dispel magic* spell cast on the portal in general will have no effect).

Peregrin did many experiments with psionics and determined that concentrating 500 PSPs on the keyrune via any destructive psionic discipline would accomplish the same result.

In the dedication, *Peregrin's Treatise* contains a short passage that can be used once per month as an "escape hatch." By reading it, the *Treatise's* owner can cast a *rope trick* spell that lasts for 24 hours on any plane.

party of adversaries (the DM should remember to check all potions and spells in the area of effect to see whether they are dispelled). Next she directs *shout* and *shatter* spells against attackers or spellcasters, to destroy any breakable containers they may be carrying (corrosive liquids may harm their owners, inflicting double normal damage).

Wentri, githyanki battle mage: INT genius; AC 8 (*stoneskin* can absorb six attacks) plus Flesh Armor; M8 (invoker); hp 38; THAC0 18; #AT 1; Dmg by spell, or by weapon type +1; C 16, I 17, W 16; ML 10; XP 6,000.

Spells: *magic missile* (×2), *protection from good, shield, shocking grasp; flaming sphere, magic mouth, pyrotechnics, shatter; dispel magic, fireball* (×2), *lightning bolt; ice storm, shout, wall of ice.*

Wentri carries a *decanter of endless water*, a dangerous item in the Astral plane. After exhausting her fire-based spells, she uncorks her *decanter* and summons forth a geyser to hose down anyone within 20′ with 30 gallons per round. Water striking a PC hurls him back 20′ unless he makes a successful Wisdom check. Water that misses has to go somewhere, and in the zero gravity of the Astral plane, it hangs around in large, wet globes.

A search of the chamber after the battle turns up the three mages' traveling spell books plus a standard spell book belonging to the githyanki sorceress Cherkva (who is currently in area 14). These books contain only those spells currently memorized by the wizards.

Loud and strange noises regularly come from the wizards' tower, so most castle residents have stopped considering them out of the ordinary. Any sounds of battle in this chamber are unlikely to attract the attention of githyanki wandering in the corridor outside.

5. Cell Block. This chamber's only features are two pairs of chains hanging from the walls, and seven heavy, barred doors. The chains are used to secure prisoners while they are tortured for information (githyanki keep no other prisoners). The githyanki need no monstrous machines to torture. Most githyanki over 4th level have the ability to Double Pain felt by creatures due to physical attacks, and knight-interrogators can inflict excruciating pain with but a touch.

This area is guarded by a single knight, who will challenge even a disguised party as soon as they enter. Unless the PCs can speak the githyanki tongue and think up a plausible reason for their presence in this chamber, the knight immediately attempts to Mindlink with Arch-Knight Galdvisk to report the intrusion. He attempts to detain the party here (fighting if necessary) until Galdvisk arrives with 1-4 knights in 2d4+2 rounds. The knights under Galdvisk's command try to imprison the PCs, using psionics to incapacitate them (Inflict Pain works nicely for this) and stripping them of all equipment.

PCs with magical or psionic abilities are manacled with *chains of absorption.* These chains act as a *rod of absorption* affecting mental powers, priests' magic, and wizards' spells, though the absorbed magic cannot be reused to cast other spells. The *chains* do not absorb powers in effect at the time of the binding, only those initiated after being bound. The party is thrown into one of the cells behind the barred doors to await questioning under the direction of Hr'a'cknir Tropos. If this happens, the adventure is pretty much over for the PCs, since the githyanki won't keep them alive once Tropos's psychic probing reveals their spying mission.

If the PCs search the cells, they find that only the cell directly opposite the door has an occupant. This cell contains the pathetic form of a human female, slobbering all over herself contentedly and making quiet gurgling noises. This is all that remains of the once powerful (now *feebleminded*) wizard Molina, a foolish mage from the Forgotten Realms who thought she could steal a githyanki *silver sword.* Now she is kept alive only so that Tropos can transcribe her extensive knowledge of Limbo and the outer planes onto the scrolls of his library (area 14) by psionically probing beyond the wizard's *feebleminded* consciousness to her intact memories and knowledge.

Molina: AL LN; AC 10; MV 12; M16; hp 2 (55); THAC0 15; #AT 1; Dmg by weapon type (no spells memorized); D 17, C 16, I 2 (17), W 2 (10), Ch 15; ML 9.

If the *feeblemind* spell is reversed (with a *heal* or *wish* spell), Molina will offer the party a reward if they escort her to Mirabar. The specific reward should tailored to the PC party: help for mages in training up levels; recharging a single rod, staff or wand; enchanting a single permanent magical item worth no more than 2,500 XP; etc.

Molina has the knowledge of a sage whose field of study is the outer planes and interplanar transit; she has an 80% chance of knowing any general fact about them. Having previously owned *Peregrin's Treatise on Fixed Portals*, she is quite familiar with the theory of fixed portal creation and knows that the only way to destroy one is to cast a *dispel magic* spell on one of the "keyrunes" inscribed during its creation. If the party cures her, she will be more than happy to assist the party by locating the keyrune in either area 1 in Mindspear Castle or area J of the Cinderspire outpost. She knows that the only way to prevent the githyanki from building another fixed portal is to recover *Peregrin's Treatise*, though she doesn't know the tome's current location.

6. Knights' Tower. Although 24 private living areas for the battalion's knights cover the inside walls of this tower, only a quarter see occasional use. The rest are empty for extended periods while their usual occupants are out on patrol in the Astral plane or with the detachment sent to Limbo.

This chamber is currently occupied by two **knights** in deep meditation. There is a 50% chance that one of the knights is using Psionic Sense to scan for psionic activity nearby; if the PCs use psionics, the knights will investigate. Otherwise, they do not stir unless the PCs start poking around the room. If they are jarred out of their meditations, the knights ask the PC with the highest-ranking disguise to justify the party's presence here. Unless the PC can think up a good excuse ("We're here on the Supreme Commander's orders, sir!") and can speak the githyanki language fluently, the knights immediately Mindlink with Arch-Knight Galdvisk and then attack. Galdvisk arrives with 1-4 knights in 2d4+2 rounds and uses tactics like those described in area 5.

7. Arch-Knight's Quarters. Two large wooden cabinets, flanking the door, are bolted to the wall along with the furnishings for a single living area.

The first cabinet contains a magical silver mirror, used by Arch-Knight Galdvisk to communicate with the Queen's Champion in the capitol. The edges of the mirror are traced with magical runes that, if properly intoned, will activate the device. If the viewer is patient, a githyanki face appears. The githyanki in the mirror is outraged that

someone other than Galdvisk has dared to use the device and sends a detachment of 10 knights to the castle at once. The knights arrive in 40 hours, probably long after the events in this adventure have played themselves out. The mirror is attuned to one place only and has no other magical functions.

The second cabinet contains Galdvisk's personal items and clothing, and a small golden coffer (worth 1,000 gp). Inside the coffer, the PCs discover a set of manacles and a 50′ coil of rope. Galdvisk uses both of these items when "retiring" a commander who has reached 12th level. The manacles are actually a set of *chains of absorption* (described in area 5) and the other item is a *rope of entanglement.*

With the githyanki attempting to establish a permanent base in Limbo, Galdvisk rarely spends any time in his quarters lately, working continually in the War Room (area 13) planning strategy.

8. Entry Foyer. This chamber is bare except for a massive set of mithril portals that lead outside. These hard metal doors get a +4 bonus on all saving throws. Spells below fifth level and all forms of psionic attack don't make a scratch on their silvery surfaces.

Normally the doors are *wizard locked* at 7th level and doubly barred from the inside. Six arrow loops in the outer wall of the chamber give a view of the Astral Plane.

There are always 20 **warriors**, two **gish**, one **sergeant**, and one **captain** on guard in this chamber, watching the approach to the main entrance through the arrowslits. All the warriors are armed with heavy crossbows in addition to their regular arms and armor. They ignore a disguised party.

9. Temple. The walls of this huge chamber are painted flat black and traced with glowing silver runes. A 30′-tall black basalt statue of the githyanki lich-queen dominates the room, surrounded by six braziers that glow dimly red and fill the chamber with spicy incense. If the PCs closely examine the statue, they discover that its surface is slick with blood.

This is the public worship hall of the githyanki's demigoddess, and other than the main barracks hall (area 3) it is the most frequented area of the castle. There are always at least 10 **warriors** here, praying dutifully to their queen. A knight functions as the priest. The worship service is relatively short (roughly one turn) and culminates with the worshipers cutting their palms with their sword blades and smearing blood over the statue of their queen.

There is a 2-in-6 chance that the dragon Apocalypse will be present in this room as well, hunched in the entrance to area 10. Even though she feels no hunger (biological functions come to a halt in the Astral plane), the dragon is attracted by the scent of freshly spilled blood. If the disguised PCs are present when the dragon makes her appearance, she will sniff a few times in their direction (this is merely to build up suspense, but don't let the players know that). The strong odors of incense and blood are more than enough to distract the dragon, providing the PCs sensibly keep at least 50′ away from her at all times.

10. Watch Dragon. This is the home for Mindspear Castle's most powerful guardian, the red dragon Apocalypse. The dragon likes her arrangement with the githyanki, whom she considers her equals. The githyanki treat her with respect and deference in order to foster this image.

Apocalypse has taken to life in the Astral plane and can often be seen gliding effortlessly about the temple and her lair, wings folded back against her body like a reptilian fish. Apocalypse has all of the deadly beauty and grace that her kind share on the Prime Material plane.

Like most dragons, she also has an enormous ego, and this tends to interfere with what her acute draconic senses might be telling her. Apocalypse is so complacent in her current surroundings that she will not notice any disguised PCs unless they approach within 50′, if the entire castle has not been put on alert. Once an alert is called, she stands on guard at the entrance to her lair. From this perch she can easily sniff out intruders passing through the temple (but not *polymorphed* PCs or those covered by a *seeming* spell) and point them out to the githyanki before attacking with her breath weapon.

Apocalypse, red dragon (mature adult): INT exceptional, AL CE, AC −6; MV 45; HD 18; hp 120; THAC0 −4; #AT 3 plus special; Dmg 1d10+7/1d10+7/

3d10+7; SA breath weapon, two wing buffet attacks, rear kick *or* tail slap; SD *dragon fear* (25 yard radius, save at +1), immune to fire; *affect normal fires, pyrotechnics, heat metal,* each once/day; MR 40%; SZ G (100′ body, 92′ tail); ML 18; XP 16,000; MC1.

Apocalypse can cast each of the following spells at 18th level of ability once per day: *magic missile, shocking grasp; darkness 15′ radius, Melf's acid arrow.*

Every now and then, when the dragon gets restless, the githyanki wizards *polymorph* her into a smaller form and *plane shift* with her to a random Prime Material plane so she can have her fill of devastation. On her numerous hunting trips, Apocalypse has accumulated a small hoard (much smaller than dragons of similar size with lairs on the Prime Material plane), but the githyanki contribute all of their gold and platinum coins to bolster the dragon's pride and self-image as much as possible.

All of the dragon's treasure floats in an enormous ball, roughly 20′ in diameter, near the center of her chamber. Her hoard includes: 17,232 cp; 15,389 sp; 7,835 ep; 3,582 gp; 1,376 pp; 15 garnets (100 gp each); 10 works of art (details to be determined by the DM, worth 1,000-12,000 gp each); 14 suits of armor; 48 weapons; and four shields.

In spite of the hoard's large size, the bulk of it is copper, silver, and electrum. Since all of the gold and platinum is mixed in with coins of lesser value, it takes either a *wish* or 24 man-hours of labor to sort out the desired coinage.

11. Advisor's Quarters. These are the personal quarters of the hr'a'cknir Tropos, although he is currently not present. The room's single chest is unlocked and contains mostly clothing. Near the bottom, wrapped in a cloth sack, are a small brazier and 10 blocks of *incense of psychic meditation.* Psychically endowed creatures who meditate in the magical aroma of this incense regain 50 PSPs per hour. A block can burn for 80 to 200 years in the Astral plane, but is consumed in 2-5 hours on a plane where time flows normally. Since normal meditation in the Astral plane calms the mind (but does not allow recovery of PSPs) the importance of this item to githyanki becomes clear. The incense has no effect on creatures with no psionic abilities.

12. Commander's Chambers. This chamber is furnished as a single living area, with a large wooden cabinet bolted to the wall on either side of the door. A halberd, a two-handed sword, a shield, and a spear have also been mounted on the wall. These are the Commander's favorite trophies, gained in his wars against the githzerai. These items are actually a githzerai *halberd +1* (nonmagical in the Astral plane), a two-handed *silver sword +3*, a *shield +3*, and a *spear +2*. A small book floating near the center of the room bears the title "The Prince," but is actually a *Tome of Leadership and Influence.*

The first cabinet contains a magical silver mirror, similar in all respects to the one in Arch-knight Galdvisk's quarters (area 7), except that this mirror is attuned to communicate with the supreme commander of the githyanki capitol. The second cabinet contains clothing, a disassembled suit of *banded mail +4*, and four *javelins of lightning.*

13. War Room. This is the command center of the castle. Cabinets attached to the wall near the entrance contain maps of the Astral plane and incomplete maps of Limbo and the Forgotten Realms as well. When the PCs first arrive here, six githyanki are reading maps spread out across the walls. They are discussing plans and strategy for their campaigns in Limbo and the northern Realms.

In the back half of the room, two **knights** and Arch-knight Galdvisk are arguing over the best way to destroy the supply lines leading to a githzerai stronghold in Limbo, while a **captain**, Hr'a'cknir Tropos, and Commander Vladmir are discussing how to conquer the city of Mirabar in the northern Realms.

Read the descriptions of Galdvisk, Tropos, and Vladmir carefully, since they must be overcome to successfully complete this adventure (see the battle plan in area 14).

Arch-knight Galdvisk is the githyanki chief of internal castle security. If intruders are detected and reported to him (via mindlink or a messenger), he usually goes personally to the scene of the disturbance, along with 1-4 knights.

Galdvisk is outfitted with the usual *silver sword* and *plate mail +4*. He also wears a *ring of fire resistance* and a *ring of blinking.* Galdvisk wears 12 fire opals (1,000 gp each), a carved gold circlet (worth 450 gp), and a carved platinum armband (worth 2,500 gp).

Arch-knight Galdvisk: INT genius; AC −4; F10; hp 105; THAC0 11; #AT 3/2; Dmg by weapon type (1d10+3 with *silver sword*); SA *aura of protection* (good creatures within 10′ suffer −1 to attack rolls), *cause* (fatal) *disease* (twice/week), *inflict wounds* (20 hp damage, once/day); SD immune to disease, +2 on all saves; C 18, I 18, W 17; ML 14; XP 12,000; Spells: *cure light wounds* (×2).

Psionics: PS = Int (17); psychometabolism (primary), metapsionics, and telepathy; PSPs 180; (in addition to those known by githyanki warriors): Adrenalin Control, Cell Adjustment, Convergence, Death Field, Double Pain, Inflict Pain, Mindlink, Psionic Sense, Shadow Form, Splice.

Tropos is a member of the elite githyanki society of the hr'a'cknir, or advisors. The hr'a'cknir are githyanki trained exclusively in sensing and channeling the strange energies that flow through the Astral plane. These fearsome psionicists are the closest thing the githyanki have to "thought police" and keep the githyanki capitol virtually free of githzerai spies.

Typically, one member of the hr'a'cknir is assigned to each major stronghold, to assist and advise the commander in matters where subterfuge and discretion (rather than naked military might) would be useful. The hr'a'cknir also function as interrogators, interpreters, and dominators when interacting with extra-planar creatures (Tropos is responsible for the Psychic Surgery performed on the gray slaad in the portal chamber, area 1).

Tropos is second in command of the castle, as his gold circlet (worth 450 gp) and platinum armband (worth 2,500 gp) proclaim. He has five large diamonds mounted on silver pins and woven into his long, single braid. Each of these 5,000-gp gems acts as a receptacle, storing a total of 250 extra PSPs for use in an emergency. He wears *bracers of defense* (AC 4) on his wrists and carries six black *beads of force* in a small pouch at his side.

Tropos also wields a long sword named Worldwalker, a *sword of the planes.* It is a +4 weapon in the Astral plane, +3 elsewhere. The blade is fluent in the Common tongue as well as the languages of the githyanki, githzerai, slaadi, tanar'ri, aasimon, and baatezu. The lawful-neutral blade has an Intelligence of 17, ego of 25, and can

detect invisible, evil, or good creatures in a 10' radius.

Worldwalker has a 50% chance of being able to perform as a native guide on a given plane. If not, the blade can help locate a native guide in half the usual time and expense due to its familiarity with the protocol for these matters. Finally, the blade can *plane shift* once each week, taking along up to seven persons or creatures touching the blade. Keep in mind the blade's extremely high ego: the sword will be very unhappy if its owner decides to keep it on a Prime Material plane for any length of time!

Hr'a'cknir Tropos: AC 0; Psi 10; hp 63; THAC0 16 (12 with Worldwalker); #AT 1; Dmg by weapon type (1d8 +4 with Worldwalker); SA psionics; SD psionics; C 17, I 17, W 18; ML 16; XP 8,000.

Psionics: PS = Int (18); psychometabolism (primary), metapsionics, psychoportation, telepathy (2nd primary); PSPs 337 (587 with receptacles); powers (in addition to those known by githyanki warriors): Adrenalin Control, Biofeedback, Cause Decay, Cell Adjustment, Convergence, Death Field, Detonate, Dimension Door, Domination, Double Pain, Heighten Senses, Ectoplasmic Form, Invincible Foes, Invisibility, Life Detection, Magnify, Martial Trance, Mind Bar, Mindlink, Post-hypnotic Suggestion, Probe, Psychic Surgery, Psionic Sense, Psionic Inflation, Receptacle, Splice, Split Personality, Stasis Field, Suspend Animation, Teleport, Truthear.

Because of his extremely large reservoir of PSPs and the magical incense in area 34, Tropos is one of the only residents of the castle to use psionics regularly. In combat, he typically uses Split Personality so he can physically and psionically attack at the same time, splicing Graft Weapon and Displacement while wielding Worldwalker.

Vladmir, the supreme commander of Mindspear Battalion is a saturnine and fatalistic githyanki. With little in life left to look forward to except eventual "retirement" at 12th level, he actually prefers the prospect of dying honorably in battle over the mysterious ritual occasionally alluded to by the Archknight. Perhaps that is why he has started making preparations for an interplanar war on the Forgotten Realms and, eventually, Limbo as well. Vladmir will fight to the death in any melee with the PCs.

Vladmir wears *field plate +3*, a *cloak of displacement*, and a *ring of spell turning*. The commander fights with Diamond-edge, the special two-handed *silver sword* that the githyanki retrieved from Molina. The blade acts as +5 weapon. If an unmodified 15 or more is rolled in combat, roll 1d6 and consult the following table:

1-3. Double damage (1d10 × 2 +9)
4. Severs hand or arm. Victim must make a system shock roll *each round* to keep fighting or pass out. Victim loses 2-5 hp per round until stump is bandaged.
5. Leg severed (effects as 4).
6. Head severed (instant death).

Vladmir also has four diamonds that he uses as psionic receptacles (the gems are worth 5,000 gp each and store a total of 200 PSPs), a carved platinum circlet (worth 3,000 gp) and a carved platinum armband (worth 2,500 gp).

Commander Vladmir: INT genius; AC −7; F11; hp 110; THAC0 10 (3 with magical sword); #AT 3/2 or 2 (specialized); Dmg by weapon type (1d10 +9 with Diamond-edge); SA specialized in long sword and two-handed sword; SD first hit by an opponent always misses (*cloak of displacement*); C 17, I 18, W 18; ML 14; XP 15,000.

Psionics: PS = Int (17); metapsionics, psychometabolism (primary), psychokinesis, and telepathy; PSPs 200 (400 with receptacle gems); powers (in addition to those known by githyanki warriors): Adrenalin Control, Cell Adjustment, Control Body, Death Field, Disintegrate, Double Pain, Inertial Barrier, Molecular Agitation, Receptacle, Soften, Splice, Telekinesis, Ultrablast.

When disguised PCs stick their noses in here, the supreme commander asks the PC with the highest ranking disguise to justify the party's presence in a restricted area. Unless the PC can think up a good excuse and can speak the githyanki language fluently, the githyanki in this chamber become suspicious and prepare to attack.

Even if the PCs make an acceptable excuse and back out of the chamber mumbling apologies, Hr'a'cknir Tropos will be sent out after them to erase the memories of all low-ranking githyanki. If the PCs allow Tropos to establish telepathic Contact with one of them, he quickly learns their true identities and attempts to telepathically warn the supreme commander.

If a battle erupts in this chamber, Galdvisk immediately summons 1-4 more knights by Mindlink before activating his *ring of blinking* and entering melee. The knights arrive in 1d4 +3 rounds, gliding into the room in Shadow Form (they use psionics to prepare for combat). Only a hermetic boundary sealing the entrances of the chamber (such as a *wall of stone* spell) can prevent the knights' arrival. If prevented from entering the room, the knights summon a wizard to dispel the barrier.

If the PCs capture the maps in this room and translate them (this takes several hours of work unless the PCs have a *comprehend languages* spell available), they can begin to see the shapings of a master githyanki plan of interplanar conquest, made possible by the creation of fixed portals and masterminded by Commander Vladmir, Archknight Galdvisk, and Hr'a'cknir Tropos. The DM should modify or add details as desired to the following master plan:

Once a second lair has been secured in Limbo and Storm has grown to maturity, Commander Vladmir will present a plan of conquest to the githyanki queen and request the support of three battalions (along with a company of 100 knights) to secure his hold on the northern Realms and begin devastation in earnest. When the northern cities of Mirabar, Luskan, and Longsaddle have been conquered, Vladmir plans to turn them into his army's source of supplies. Fighting a large-scale war in Limbo will require an incredible amount of food (something that cannot be easily grown in the Astral plane), armor, weapons, and labor (to build fortifications). With his supply lines secure on another plane, Vladmir will request the majority of forces from the githyanki capitol to strike at no less than the githzerai capitol: Shra'kt'lor.

Of course, the success of these plans depends entirely on the whim of the queen and her desire to commit such a large portion of her forces in a single endeavor, something she has been loath to do thus far. Still, Vladmir is confident that, once he explains the intricacies of his plan, she will give her consent. The time scale implicit in this plan is considerable. The growth of a dragon to maturity, the conquest of the northern Realms—these are precursors to the siege of Shra'kt'lor and could take at least a century to achieve.

If the battle plans are damaged during

a battle in this chamber, it is up to the DM to decide how much (if any) of this plan to reveal to the PCs (a *fireball*, for example, might wipe out all traces of the maps).

14. Main Library. The windowless walls of this chamber are covered with glass-doored cabinets containing books that represent a vast amount of collected knowledge about the outer planes (especially Limbo). A single yellow-robed githyanki floats cross-legged near the center of the room, a wide crimson tome spread open across her lap.

This is Cherkva, the senior sorceress of the battalion. She has retreated here to escape the loud contest in her quarters (area 4) and read a book she recently acquired in Molina's stronghold, a *libram of ineffable damnation.*

If the disguised PCs barge in here, she angrily orders them to leave unless they can come up with a good reason for their presence. Cherkva is so engrossed in her work that she has a −4 to her surprise roll, although her *stoneskin* spell protects her from all but a magical assault at first. She does not allow low-ranking githyanki to peruse the contents of the library.

Cherkva (githyanki sorceress): INT genius; AC 9 (*stoneskin* can absorb eight attacks) plus Flesh Armor; M10; hp 50; THAC0 17 (14 with staff); #AT 1; Dmg by spell or weapon type; C 16, I 18, W 15; ML 10; XP 9,000; *libram of ineffable damnation,* four potions (*fire breath, extra-healing, speed, polymorph self*), *staff of striking* (14 charges).

Spells: *burning hands, enlarge, magic missile* (×2), *shield; Melf's acid arrow, knock, ray of enfeeblement, stinking cloud, web; fireball, haste, lightning bolt, Maximilian's stony grasp*; ice storm, thunder staff** (×2); *Bigby's interposing hand, cloudkill, cone of cold.*

Psionics: PS = Int (18); psychometabolism (primary), metapsionics, psychoportation, telepathy; PSPs 190; powers (in addition to those known by githyanki warriors): Adrenalin Control, Cell Adjustment, Convergence, Death Field, Dimension Door, Double Pain, Mindlink, Psionic Sense, Splice, Stasis Field, Teleport.

If combat breaks out in this chamber, Cherkva will not use her powerful offensive spells for fear of damaging the library. During the first few rounds, she casts her *thunder staff* spells, more to alert the githyanki in area 13 than to inflict devastating damage. Provided the githyanki there have not already been slain, use the following time table:

First round: Cherkva casts *thunder staff.*

Second round: Cherkva casts *thunder staff* again. Arch Knight Galdvisk (from area 13) Mindlinks with Cherkva and determines that there has been a security breach.

Third round: In area 13, Galdvisk and his two knights assume Shadow Form; Tropos initiates Split Personality; Vladmir and the captain from area 13 arrive at the end of the round. Cherkva initiates Body Armor.

Fourth round: Vladmir and the captain attack with their swords. Cherkva casts *haste.* The knights arrive in Shadow Form and position themselves behind the PCs for a surprise attack next round. From the safety of area 13, Tropos uses one Split Personality to scan the PCs for psionic activity with Psionic Sense; the other personality either engages any psionic PCs in a psychic contest or Splices together Contact and Domination to directly control a nonpsionic PC.

Fifth round and on: Vladmir and the captain continue to attack with their swords. Cherkva casts spells. The knights materialize from Shadow Form (check PC surprise) and attack with their swords and psionics on the succeeding round. Tropos wages psychic contests with the PCs or attempts to Dominate them.

These githyanki fight to the death. If not eliminated early in the battle, during the 8th or 9th round of combat Tropos Mindlinks with any surviving knights in the castle and orders them to muster a counter strike. If this occurs, the knights glide into the room in Shadow Form in 1d4 + 3 rounds, fully prepared for battle.

If the githyanki in area 13 have already been eliminated prior to the party's entrance to the library, or if Tropos is prevented from calling in reinforcements, the PCs can take time to survey the library for information regarding their mission. Almost all the information in this library is written in the githyanki language and will be of little help to PCs in this adventure. The accounts that the githyanki torturers transcribed of Molina's extra-planar travel (see area 5) are all very interesting, but not very useful or valuable.

However, if the party's mages had the foresight to memorize *detect magic* spells, they can spot a total of six magical texts in the room. The first is the *libram of ineffable damnation* that Cherkva was perusing when they entered the room.

The next three texts are oversized tomes covered in glossy scarlet leather (actually baby red dragon skin) that lends an additional +4 on saving throws vs. fire. Each book is inscribed with *explosive runes* that have recently been attuned to the githyanki wizards of the Mindspear Battalion. These three tomes are the standard spell books of the human wizard Molina and contain all of the first- to fifth-level spells listed in the *Player's Handbook.* Molina's higher-level spell book was destroyed when the githyanki accidentally triggered her *explosive runes.*

The fifth magical volume inspected is a *vacuous grimoire,* but the sixth contains information vital to the success of the quest. This large, silver-gray tome bears the title *Peregrin's Treatise on Fixed Portals* (its contents are described in the sidebar on page 66). If the PCs did not memorize *detect magic* spells, they each have a 1% chance of picking up a magical text from the surrounding mundane volumes in the library.

Escape from the Silver Realm

If the PCs defeat the githyanki in areas 13 and 14 without alerting the rest of the stronghold and obtain *Peregrin's Treatise,* they must still sneak back to area 1 and escape. This should be considerably more difficult that sneaking into the stronghold, especially since their magical and mundane disguises might have been ruined by combat. The DM should harry the PCs' retreat and make it feel as though they just barely made it out of the castle alive. One or two encounters with roaming githyanki patrols of 2-12 warriors should do the trick nicely. If an alarm was sounded during battle in areas 13 or 14, make sure to stage three or four encounters (chosen from the random encounter table) before the PCs reach area 1.

When they party arrives in the kaleidoscopic gate chamber, the PCs must confront the demented slaad and his *symbol of pain* again. He is his quirky and rambling self if the party still has the remains of a disguise at this point, but if they look like humans, the slaad assumes his normal form and attacks at once. If the PCs are in danger of being wiped out, a kind DM might allow the party to retreat to Cinderspire though the gate. The slaad does not pursue.

Closing the Gate

After the PCs return to the githyanki

outpost in Cinderspire, Arelisa uses her considerable magical talents to hold back any tide of githyanki coming through the gate while the PCs use the knowledge gained from the *Treatise* to shut the fixed portal forever. If Molina was rescued from area 5 and healed, she can immediately pick out the keyrune and tell the PCs that they need to cast a *dispel magic* spell or channel an immense amount of psychic energy to destroy it. Arelisa will be glad to lend her relatively untapped psychic strength to this endeavor, if the PCs do not have the combined 500 PSPs to pull it off by themselves.

Once a successful *dispel magic* spell has been cast, or 500 PSPs have been channeled into the keyrune, read or paraphrase the following to the players:

> The runes covering the chamber begin to move and writhe on the walls, glowing with silver-gray intensity. One by one, the gleaming runes slip off the wall and cascade to the floor, vanishing in small bursts of light.
>
> After the last rune has fallen, the silvery gate begins to lose its three-dimensional, orblike shape. First it flattens into a circular disk, then it quickly collapses into a silvery, two-dimensional line. At last, the line contracts into a single point and winks away.

For closing the fixed portal leading to the Realms, the party should share a story award of 50,000 XP.

Concluding the Adventure

After the gate has been successfully closed, the party should be physically weakened and almost completely out of spells. While the PCs are recovering, it is a relatively easy matter for Arelisa to pilfer *Peregrin's Treatise* and *plane shift* back to Limbo. After her disappearance, the PCs find a scroll among their possessions, containing a parting message from Arelisa:

> *I regret the need for deception in these matters, but now it no longer matters if you know the truth or not. The real Countess Nemours will be returned to her estate while you are reading this letter. I cannot thank you enough for the service you have performed for my people. We have been battling the githyanki for millennia, on countless realities and worlds that defy description. Rest assured that your Realms are now safe from githyanki conquest, at least during your lifetimes.*
>
> *I would advise that you take precautions to defend yourselves from a retaliatory strike by the githyanki. They are not ones to let an insult like this pass lightly. If you keep any of their silver swords, be doubly warned: The githyanki consider these to be their holiest of relics, not resting until each and every one of those blades is recovered and the thieves destroyed. You would be best advised to cast these blades back into the Silver Realm (or preferably another plane of existence) rather than keep them and live in fear. For the githyanki will come to reclaim them, of that you can be certain. The decision is yours.*
>
> *Unfortunately, the decision to keep the magical tome cannot be left to you, for it is too dangerous a weapon to remain in your hands. You are much better off without it, since the githyanki, now that they know of its existence, will spare no expense to recover it. Trust me, it is much safer where I take it now than were it to remain with you in the Realms.*
>
> *I thank you for your assistance. If you ever visit Shra'kt'lor in the future, my estate will be glad to offer you hospitality, although I doubt I will be there to greet you personally at the time. As you no doubt realize, my assignments keep me far from home most of the time.*
>
> *Sincerely,*
> *Arelisa*

If the adventurers heed Arelisa's advice and dispose of any *silver swords* they may be carrying, they should have no further trouble with the githyanki (unless they start looking for trouble in the Astral plane). If they decide to keep any *silver swords*, the DM should feel free to send a githyanki war party after them in several years time, long after they have let down their guard.

Finally, the party may learn that their days of planar adventures have just begun. What are these other "realities" that Arelisa mentioned? Who are Arelisa's people, and where is Shra'kt'lor? Molina, if she was rescued, will be more than happy to educate the PCs on matters regarding planar travel and life on other planes of existence. The friendship of a high-level mage is often a reward worth more than gold. If the PCs keep the sword Worldwalker, the blade demands that the PCs start traveling the planes immediately--why not start with Olympus, or Gladsheim, perhaps? Ω

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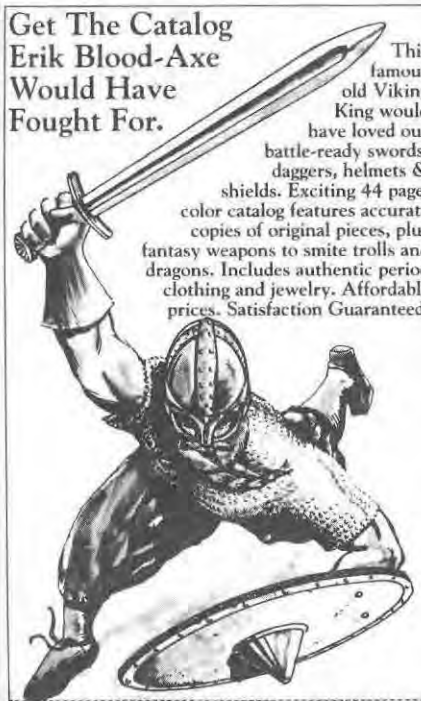

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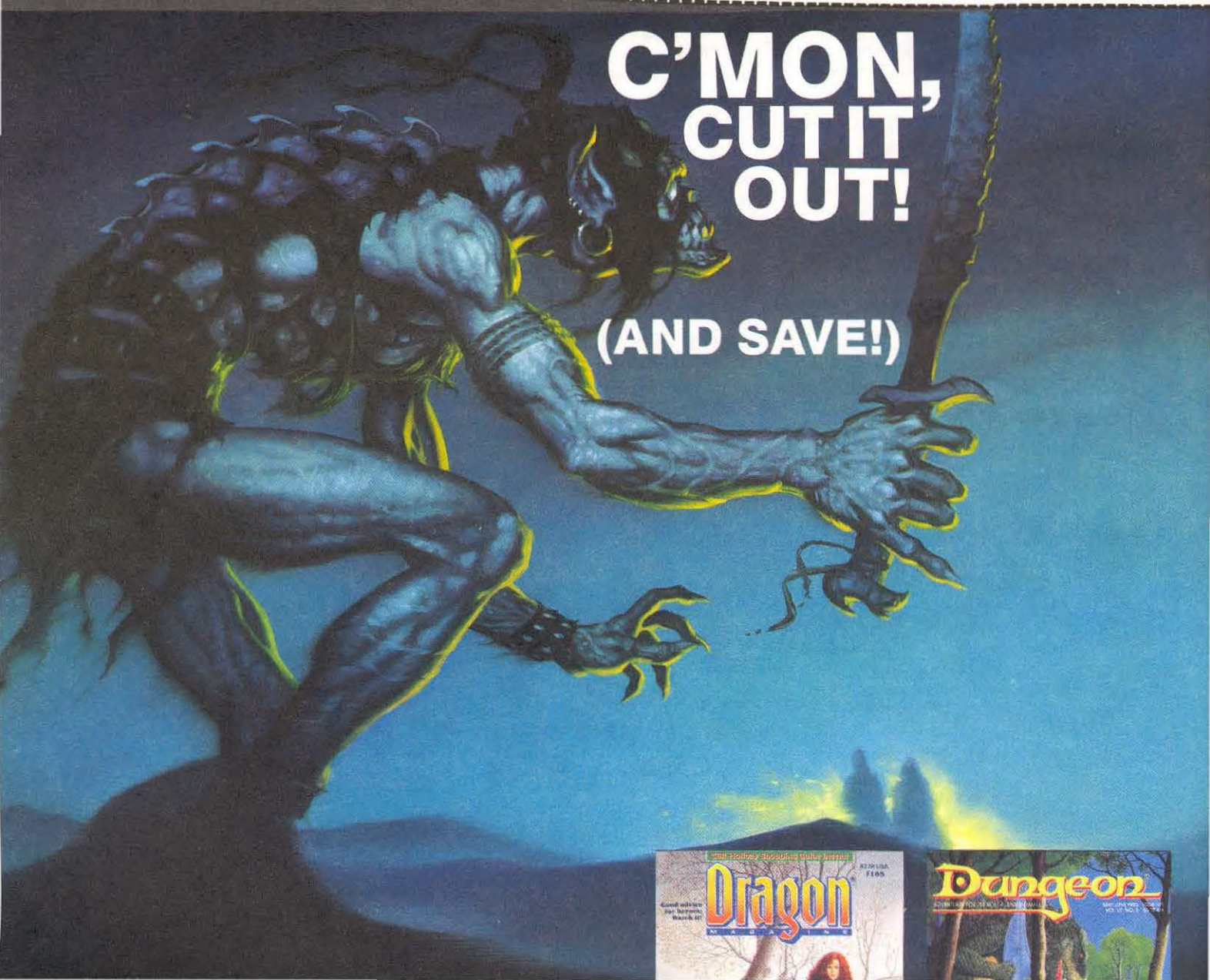

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